“We Live in Different Worlds”: The perspectives of Manitoba educators on settler colonialism, Indigenous-settler relations, and reconciliation

by

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Abstract

The Canadian Truth and Reconciliation Commission positions education as the "key to reconciliation." Combining insights from settler colonialism and critical theory, this study embraces an ethnographic research design that seeks to explore how educators in Manitoba understand and experience Indigenous and settler relationships in Canada. Through in-depth interviews with settler and Indigenous educators working in the public school system in Manitoba, this study documents how educators understand settler colonialism and reconciliation, as well as some of the challenges they face in working towards education *as* reconciliation.

Participants in this project describe their work within the education system to enact and embody education *as* reconciliation. Findings from this study demonstrate that for many educators, reconciliation is about addressing the inequities between Indigenous and settler students; creating/pushing/making space for Indigenous education in the education system; and centring Indigenous knowledges, cultures, and identities. However, multiple challenges exist. Findings from this study demonstrate that structural barriers such as neoliberalism, poverty, and anti-Indigenous racism, serve to exacerbate the gross inequities that exist between Indigenous and settler students. Within the education system, teacher education programs, curricula, and patterns of staffing and employment all serve as barriers to education. Perhaps the most challenging, however, is the everyday perceptions, actions, and practices of settlers that work to maintain the settler status quo. This includes a reluctance and/or refusal by settler educators to engage with Indigenous content, histories, cultures, and identity. The perpetuation of colonial knowledge relegates colonization to something of the past and fails to make the connections between historic and present-day harm and oppression. Patterns of settler ignorance, denial, and apathy are pervasive and work to sustain the conditions of settler colonial dominance. The education system must make a concerted effort to challenge this colonial knowledge, while working to address the inequities facing Indigenous children and youth in education, if it is to work towards reconciliation.

This dissertation occurs in the context of the ongoing dispossession and oppression of Indigenous peoples in Canada, alongside the more than 400 years of resistance by Indigenous peoples to that dispossession.

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Acronyms and Short forms

BIPOC:	Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour
EA:	Educational Assistant
EDI:	Equity, diversity, and inclusion
IRSS:	Indian Residential School System
IRSSA:	Indian Residential School Settlement Agreement
MB:	Manitoba
PACS:	Peace and Conflict Studies
PD:	Professional Development
SRO:	School Resource Officer
TINA:	There Is No Alternative
TRC:	Truth and Reconciliation Commission
UN:	United Nations
UNDRIP:	United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

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Chapter 1. Introduction

> The beliefs and attitudes that were used to justify the establishment of Residential Schools are not things of the past: they continue to animate official Aboriginal policy today. Reconciliation will require more than apologies for the shortcomings of those who preceded us. It obliges us to recognize the ways in which the legacy of Residential Schools continues to disfigure Canadian life and to abandon policies and approaches that currently serve to extend that hurtful legacy.
>
> - Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (2015b, p. 104)

Introduction: Protracted Conflict and Cultivated Ignorance in Canada

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) of Canada (2015c) asserts that "the relationship between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples is not a mutually respectful one" (p. 6). Hierarchical power relations between settlers and Indigenous peoples (Battell Lowman & Barker, 2015), destructive stories and myths (Regan, 2010), embedded structures of anti-Indigenous racism (LaRocque, 1991; Macdonald, 2015), and settler apathy and willful ignorance directed towards Indigenous experiences, epistemologies, and ontologies (Monture-Angus, 2001; Rice, Dion, Fowlie, & Breen, 2020) demonstrate the dominance and pervasiveness of the settler colonial narrative in Canadian society and serve as just some of the barriers to achieving meaningful reconciliation between Indigenous peoples and settlers in Canada. Marie Wilson, former Commissioner of the TRC asked "How do you reconcile with strangers? After 150 years of official co-habitation, we still live so much of our live in separate rooms, separate realities" (cited in Vowel, 2016, back cover).

Equally troubling is the deteriorating relationship between the Canadian state (and its institutions) and Indigenous peoples. Indigenous leaders, scholars, activists, Indian Residential

School System Survivors and their families, alongside settler allies have been vocal in their assertion that Indigenous peoples in Canada have survived extended genocidal practices by the Canadian state. Indeed, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (2015c) concluded its report by acknowledging the state's practices against Indigenous peoples in Canada amounted to cultural genocide (p. 1). The National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, citing the work of Polish Jewish jurist, Raphael Lemkin (1944) whose work shaped the definition of genocide as outlined in the United Nations Genocide Convention, concluded that the violence against Indigenous women and girls is facilitated by colonial structures. The National Inquiry removed the qualifier of *cultural* as it was used by the TRC, and instead, asserted that genocide has and continues to occur (2019a, 2019b).

Mi'kmaq lawyer and activist Pam Palmater explains that Canada's genocidal acts of the past continue today through the state's racist laws, policies, and actions towards Indigenous peoples (as cited in National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, 2019a). Settler colonialism, while no longer reproduced through overtly coercive means, continues, characterized by domination, paternalism, oppression, and various forms of violence (Coulthard, 2014, pp. 6-7; Razack, 2002). Resource extraction and development and its intersection with Treaties and Aboriginal title (Tattrie, 2020), and the lack of implementation of free, prior, and informed consent are indicators of ongoing processes of land theft and erasure under the guise of neoliberal economic development by the settler state (Barker, 2009; Egan, 2011; Frost, 2019; Preston, 2013, 2017; Thomas-Muller, 2019; Unist'ot'en, 2017). Increasing inequities among intersecting issues such as poverty (Macdonald & Wilson, 2013), housing (Alaazi, Masuda, Evans, & Distasio, 2015), health (Sylvestre, Castleden, Denis, Martin, &

Bombay, 2019; Wilk, Maltby, & Cooke, 2017), overrepresentation of Indigenous peoples in the child welfare (Blackstock, 2011; Ward, Blackstock, & Smithx, 2019) and in the criminal justice systems (Cesaroni, Grol, & Fredericks, 2018), combined with stark indifference and ignorance from settler society contribute to a state of deep-rooted, protracted social conflict in the country. These inequities have only been made more apparent in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic (Carling & Mankani, 2020; Richardson & Crawford, 2020).

Despite the overwhelming inequities in Canadian society, and the structural, cultural, and institutional violence experienced by Indigenous peoples at the hands of the settler colonial state, there is a degree of ignorance, apathy, and indifference in the mainstream, across multiple sectors of society (Regan, 2010). Moreover, there is a deep reluctance to acknowledge the social conflict that exists in Canada, including among academic fields such as Peace and Conflict Studies (PACS). Papachase Cree scholar Dwayne Donald (2012) notes that "the significance of colonialism as a social, cultural, and educative force has not yet been meaningfully contemplated" owing in large part to a "deeply learned habit of disregarding the experiences and memories of Aboriginal peoples of Canada" (p. 91). This ignorance is not a neutral absence of knowledge with an openness to learning (Schaefli, 2018), but rather is an epistemic ignorance characterized by a powerful circular logic that aims to sustain the strategic methods of not knowing, so as to maintain the status quo (Godlewska, Moore, & Bednasek, 2010; May, 2006; Spivak, 1987; Tuck & Gaztambide-Fernández, 2013). Settler colonialism operates in a way that "covers its tracks" (Veracini, 2011) so that the ongoing dispossession of land and resources is rendered unexceptional (Barker, 2009; Moreton-Robinson, 2015),

invisiblized by political, social and economic settler colonial structures. It becomes enmeshed in the settler common sense (Rifkin, 2013) and enacted in everyday modes of being in the world.

Research Questions and Objectives

Schools are not only sites of knowledge transmission, but also sites of power, and the education system remains an integral site of conflict in Canada.[1] Education in Canada, in both a historic and contemporary sense, has been used as a tool of colonialism and racism (Battiste, 2013, 2018; Battiste & Youngblood Henderson, 2018; Korteweg & Fiddler, 2018; Schaefli, 2018). Perhaps most notably, the Indian Residential School System (IRSS) and its legacies is "powerfully symbolic of the flawed relationship" between settlers and Indigenous peoples (Castellano, Archibald, & DeGagné, 2008, p. 404). The IRSS was a system of education that was used to bolster the settler colonial project in Canada and facilitated direct and indirect forms of violence towards Indigenous children and the broader communities of which they were part, serving as a tool for disconnection and alienation from their cultures and identities (St. Germain & Dyck, 2011, p. v). The forced assimilationist policies so indicative of the IRSS enforced and were reinforced by curricula that touted the superiority of western ontologies and epistemologies, while also depicting Indigenous communities as the Other – culturally and morally inferior (Regan, 2010, p. 68). The curricula affected both Indigenous and settler students albeit in different ways. It served to legitimize the unjust status quo, while also

[1] Literature on education as a site of conflict in Canada is diverse. It may be discipline specific (i.e., focusing on education in medicine, nursing, social work, physical education). It includes an emphasis on higher education institutions (de Oliveira Andreotti, Stein, Ahenakew, & Hunt, 2015; Gaudry & Lorenz, 2018, 2019; Louie, Poitras-Pratt, Hanson, & Ottmann, 2017), teacher training programs (Cannon, 2012; Kelly & Brandes, 2001; Kerr & Parent, 2018; Marom, 2019; Solomon, Portelli, Daniel, & Campbell, 2005), as well as elementary and secondary schooling (Castagno, 2008; Miles, 2020; Milne & Wotherspoon, 2020). It also focuses on various manifestations of settler colonialism in education such as racism and privilege (Carr, 2016; Lund & Carr, 2015; Schick, 2014).

perpetuating a notion that Indigenous peoples and settler groups inhabit separate realities, with ultimately irreconcilable differences (Donald, 2009, 2012). The remnants of this education system remain in place today and are apparent in Eurocentric curricula (Battiste, 2013; Battiste & Youngblood Henderson, 2000; Schick, 2014), exclusion of Indigenous languages in education (Wohlberg, 2016), structured systemic inequalities that accentuate and continue to widen the educational gaps between Indigenous peoples and settlers (Charbonneau, 2016; Olsen Harper & Thompson, 2017; Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015e) and cultivated ignorance among the settler population (Schaefli, 2018). Understandings of the settler colonial context in which the education system operates, and the ways that harms and benefits of settler colonialism affect both Indigenous populations and settlers, must be considered.

While this understanding at a structural and systemic level is necessary, it is not only these systemic factors that are at work in the educational system. It is also the people there – the bodies of teachers as well as students, who carry and share knowledge (Jansen, 2009). As institutional actors in relative positions of power, many educators continue to work in a settler colonial setting that they have also grown up in, in a social world that has been shaped by processes of elimination and erasure of Indigenous peoples, and thus carry knowledge that must be engaged, interrupted, and transformed. As inheritors of social location and as political agents, educators are uniquely placed to contribute to social transformation in this country, contributing to more equitable relationships between settlers and Indigenous peoples. As its central goal, this dissertation explores educators' understandings of Indigenous and settler relationships and social conflict in Canada. The dissertation seeks to understand the various conceptualizations of reconciliation utilized by educators who consider themselves actively

working towards reconciliation and to uncover the ways that educators are engaging with and responding to educational policies and curricula related to reconciliation in a settler colonial society. In order to contribute to reconciliation, as outlined by the TRC (2015e, pp. 7, Section 63; Subsection iv), this study also attempts to address the following sub-questions: how is reconciliation framed in schools; what narratives of reconciliation are espoused in the work of educators; how do they perceive their agency in the educational system; what are some of the barriers that exist in teaching for reconciliation in the educational setting; and what are some of the factors that facilitate education for reconciliation.

Situating Myself: *Where do I come from?* and *Who am I?*

The Honourable Murray Sinclair has repeatedly asserted that society, and in particular educational institutions, must equip children to answer what Indigenous Elders and philosophers have referred to as the 'great questions in life' namely: *Where do I come from? Where am I going? Why am I here?* and *Who am I?* (Sinclair, 2014a, 2014b). It is these questions that shape our worldview and understanding the answers to these questions means knowing our personal stories and the stories of our ancestors, as well as our collective story, namely the stories of the community and groups of which we are part (Kelly, 2021; Sinclair, 2014b). Engaging with and reflecting on these questions served as a grounding, fostering a stance of humility and critical engagement (DiAngelo & Sensoy, 2014; Lund & Lianne, 2015) as I navigated my way through this research. Moreover, the answers to these questions influenced the decisions I made in this research project (Milner, 2007; Shear & Krutka, 2018). As such, and following the lead of Indigenous scholars, it is necessary that I include myself in this writing, making explicit my own sense of identity, place, language, and culture, and positioning myself

and my relationship with the research.

I was born and raised in Glasgow, Scotland. As a teenager, I immigrated with my family to Canada, where we settled on the lands of the Anishinaabeg, Cree, Oji-Cree, Dakota, and Dene peoples, and on the homeland of the Métis Nation, now occupied by the province of Manitoba. Prior to leaving Scotland, I knew little of Canada and of its history and what I did know was marred in stereotypes, and a likeness to all things American including those tropes from Hollywood western films. Images of Mounties, ice rinks, and maple leaves, and of vast expansive landscapes summed up my impression of Canada. I knew even less of Winnipeg, and admittedly, it took many years for me to even begin to engage in the history of this city and country I now call home.

The challenges of immigration, of adjustment, and settlement consumed the first years of our lives in suburban Winnipeg, adding to what is an already tumultuous time – adolescence. My parents struggled in building a new life for our family, however I was relatively sheltered from those struggles. We lived a fairly insulated life in suburban Winnipeg, surrounded by mainly white (or white-presenting) families in a middle- to upper-class neighbourhood. As I reflect on those first few years in Winnipeg, I struggled to adapt to this new life and in some ways positioned myself as a bit of an outsider, never quite fitting in, or perhaps not wanting to. My parents quite possibly remember this adjustment phase differently in part because I excelled in school, participated in extra-curricular activities, and slowly built a small group of friends. In time, my parents also built a small network of friends and acquaintances many of whom had connections to Scotland – however tenuous. I would not call it a diaspora group – in fact, I longed for such a community of people my age with shared memories, of a shared sense

of humour, and of experiences of Scotland as I knew it (as opposed to the Scotland of folk tales) but it was the closest we had found.

My parents and I still knew very little about the oppression that had been waged on Indigenous peoples in this country. My parents spoke of their feelings of confusion as to why Indigenous communities were struggling. There had been nothing to suggest anything other than a peaceful relationship between Indigenous communities and the Canadian state – my formal education, our peer groups, the media representations of Canadian history – did little to provide an education into the dynamics of settler colonialism in this country and unfortunately, we did very little in terms of seeking out new knowledge. However, we did begin to see that all was not as well and as peaceful as we had envisioned. Some of my family's first introductions to Canada's true history was through my dad's employment as a plumber, first at Muskrat Dam Lake First Nation, and then Kashechewan First Nation. My dad recounted his time there and his being confronted with some of the issues affecting the community resulting from their relationship with the Crown, the most visible of which for my dad was the suicide rate among the community's youth (Palmater, 2019b).

While my dad remained working away, I remember attending a barbeque with my mum, not long after our arrival in Winnipeg and it was in this setting that I remember perhaps my first introduction to the racism waged against Indigenous peoples in Canada. We sat outside with a group of people who would have identified themselves as first- and second-generation immigrants, primarily from the United Kingdom. Somehow the conversation had turned to Indigenous peoples in Canada. I don't recall how or why, or what the context had been, but the familiar trope of "why can't they just get over it" was stated. Heads nodded in agreement, but

my mum, while still lacking in understanding of the systemic issues facing Indigenous peoples in this country knew enough to know this was wrong. She recalled it was her "that's it" moment; she stood up, loudly announcing that "we are still talking about Braveheart and no one tells us to get over it." We walked out of the social gathering, as I sheepishly followed. And I remember being so embarrassed, not because of the rudeness or audacity of the initial comment, but rather that my mum had challenged this status quo and explicit anti-Indigenous racism. As I reflect now, it is my mum's stances that have led me to an epistemological stance and an approach to research that is rooted in both care and challenge.

My formal schooling in junior and high school, and even my undergraduate degree at the University of Manitoba, did little in the way of providing any sort of comprehensive understanding of the structures of oppression in this country. Studying to become a Canadian citizen using the "Discover Canada: The Rights and Responsibilities of Citizenship" study guide did little to expand this knowledge base. While more recent versions of this document are improving, at the time it presented a view of Canada as having a peaceful relationship with Indigenous peoples in this country. It was not until I returned to Scotland to complete my Masters' degree that my eyes began to open, in part owing to a (now defunct) program and amazing classmates that helped me make connections between the issues facing Indigenous peoples in Canada to broader struggles for Indigenous rights and sovereignty across the globe. The political context at the time – namely the statement of apology by then Prime Minster Stephen Harper to former students of the Indian Residential School System (IRSS) also played a role. I began to wonder how I had managed to live for so many years in Canada and not know this full history. Upon completion of my Masters' degree, I returned to Winnipeg and shortly

thereafter began working in what was then the Research and Curation department of the Canadian Museum for Human Rights. While the Museum was/is marred in controversy at many levels (Eliadis, 2020), I had the opportunity to meet many wonderful colleagues and it was in part this experience that encouraged my pursuit of my doctoral studies, interested in the ways in which conflict and oppression can be minimized or erased in national narratives. In the early stages of my doctoral studies, I was fortunate enough to participate in a field course offered by the Peace and Conflict Studies department entitled *Truth, Memory and Reconciliation.* Dr. Dean Peachey, now retired from the University of Winnipeg, collaborated with Marius Brand (previously affiliated with Cornerstone Institute, Cape Town) on a course that explored the role of memory, trauma, and memory-making in contemporary South Africa. And again, it was in a land far from home that I had the opportunity to reflect on the Canadian context, the ways in which conflict marks and is marked by the land, the ways in which identity and identities frame our interactions with each other and has been a key driver of conflict, the ways in which socioeconomic divisions cut through reconciliation, the power of whiteness and of settler colonialism, the role of education in reconciliation, as well as the role of everyday people in being responsible for and active in social transformation.

This dissertation is my attempt to explore some of those issues in this land I now call home. After the release of the TRC's Summary Report (2015c) and the subsequent Calls to Action (2015e), I felt compelled to act but did not know where or how to begin. This study is my very small attempt to enact some degree of responsibility for the privilege of living in Canada, and to contribute to reconciliation using my developing skills and capacities in research. I engage in this research as a white, class-privileged, able-bodied, heterosexual, university-

educated, cis-female. As settler educator Joel Kincheloe (1999) noted regarding advocates of critical research and pedagogy, I make no pretense of neutrality. I point out my identities not to sound trite nor performative (Snelgrove, Kaur Dhamoon, & Corntassel, 2014) nor as an attempt to remove myself from complicity in colonization. As Bell (2014) asserts, all non-indigenous citizens are implicated in colonial dynamics; there are "no positions of innocence" (p. 7). I acknowledge that as a settler, I am implicated in the ongoing process of displacement of Indigenous peoples. Moreover, despite my attempts at taking an anti-colonial stance, it is very likely that as white scholar Robin DiAngelo (2018) acknowledges regarding her own work, this dissertation is written with a white audience as default.

Throughout this project, I worried about how my actions and intentions attempting to engage in a project on reconciliation may be construed particularly as those of a white settler – I worried about not being connected enough to the community in question, and about not being reciprocal in my approach to research and community engagement. The TRC's Calls to Actions (2015e) provided some sense of grounding here – the notion that settlers must engage in reconciliation. Moreover, I participated as best I could in community events relating to the study, and have attempted to prioritize the work of Indigenous scholars and activists who have long been committed to the core imperatives of settler colonial studies as it is known today (Snelgrove et al., 2014).

I also come to this project from an outsider perspective, exploring issues facing educators in public elementary and high schools, while being outside of that educational system. Moreover, I recognize that I may not be able to fully capture the intricacies of working in this educational system and in the various schools and school divisions from which

participants were located, accounting for the nuances of workplace culture, associations, and language as examples (Olive, 2014). As I reflect, I also recognize that I cannot completely fathom the tremendous burden placed on educators particularly in light of the COVID-19 pandemic (Lefebvre, 2020). However, it is my assertion that this outsider perspective is also beneficial, providing an opportunity to question those assumptions and understandings that may be taken for granted. Also ensuring that the thick description collected from participants was central in the findings, I suggest that my *outsider* perspective stands not as a polar opposite – completely separate to that of an *insider* perspective. Instead, I strived for a synthesis of the 'emic' (insider) and 'etic' (outsider) perspectives (Agar, 2011; Patton, 2010; Yin, 2010). My aim was to highlight the voices of the research participants, while making apparent and being reflexive on the ways in which my own lens as a researcher impacted the interpretation of the data collected (Madden, 2010).

Situating the Research: *Why am I here?* and *Where am I going?*

The role that educators and education can play in reconciliation was an area that immediately piqued my attention when the TRC's Calls to Action (2015e) were released. I recalled hearing Dr. Jonathan Jansen speak during my trip to South Africa. Jansen is a Black, South African educator and activist. In his book, *Knowledge in the Blood* (2009), Jansen recalls his professional experience as one that moved from working "in a world of Black struggles into the heart of whiteness" (p. 2), taking roles as the first Black Dean of Education at the University of Pretoria in 2000, and then as the first Black Rector and Vice-Chancellor appointed in University of the Free State's history in 2009. Both the University of Pretoria and University of the Free State (situated in Bloemfontein) were key educational institution during Apartheid,

remaining whites-only institute until 1989 and 1996 respectively. Jansen reflects on a time of intense social and political change in South Africa, and attempts to understand the ways in which knowledge is and was created, transmitted and mediated by young white Afrikaners who were born after the fall of apartheid, but yet remained attached to that system holding rigid ideas about the Other. I thought that similarities may exist in the Canadian setting and was interested in understanding the perspectives of white educators who were not engaged, or perhaps more accurately, who were resistant to reconciliation. I was particularly interested in how such viewpoints can and do exist in a context of subjugated knowledges (Gordon, 1980, pp. 80-84), where public institutions such as educational institutions, the media, and social movements are bringing to light complex histories and where society itself is in a period of transition, as the operation of the TRC – a transitional justice mechanism – may suggest.

The initial decision to recruit white settler educators as participants was not without concern. I was apprehensive that such an approach could be considered not as an attempt to interrogate settler positionality, but rather as a means of further silencing Indigenous voices. I hoped that by incorporating and privileging Indigenous scholars and activists in the research itself, I would be able to counter such considerations. However, I soon ran into another set of challenges. In hindsight, it was naïve to think that I could use my positionality as a white settler to try to reach white, settler educators. In a practical sense, this would mean trying to recruit a population that would likely not want to be interviewed and share such views in a public, albeit an anonymous forum with a researcher that they did not know or have any relationships with. However, there was perhaps a greater concern that such an approach highlighted, namely that such an individualistic approach ran the risk of reducing systemic oppressions and power

imbalances resulting from settler colonialism to individual failings of a particular individual. I was concerned that the dissertation would then be an exercise in publicly naming and shaming without a deeper interrogation of issues relating to accountability and dismantling intersecting and structural oppressions (Out in the Open, 2019; Ross, 2019).

I sought guidance first from my advisory committee, from individuals and colleagues working in the education system in Winnipeg, and then from Elder Clayton Sandy from Sioux Valley Dakota Nation. Elder Clayton has many years of experience working with the Manitoba Government including with the Department of Education. He is also the co-founder of *Circles of Reconciliation* – a community-based initiative that aims to build bridges through intergroup dialogue between Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities. Clayton recommended that I work to hear the stories not of those who are resistant to reconciliation, but rather work to hear and present the stories of those who he called the "worker bees of reconciliation" – those committed to reconciliation and working towards more equitable relationships (2019). The selection of participants would not be on their identity as settlers or non-Indigenous individuals, but rather would be on their commitment to the principles embodied in the TRC's Calls to Action (2015e). My dissertation and its explorations have been strengthened by the inclusion of Indigenous participants, their voices, and experiences and I owe that to Elder Clayton Sandy.

While focused on the realm of education, this dissertation is also rooted in identities. It is about the meanings given to identities, on how those identities are articulated and the effects of those articulations (Bell, 2014, p. 4), and on exploring the barriers that groups face in

their struggles for equality (DiAngelo, 2018). Drawing from PACS,[2] it aims to account for how social identity impacts protracted social conflict, serving as both a cause and escalating factor (Arthur, 2011, p. 4; Lederach, 2003; Northrup, 1989, p. 55; Tajfel, 1972; Wetherell, 2010). While PACS literature uses the term protracted social conflict to refer primarily to conflict in lesser-developed countries, the term and some of its defining characteristics – conflict between identity groups, the deprivation and denial of basic needs, the state's role in facilitating or denying the social groups' rights (Azar, 1990; Burton, 1990; Ramsbotham, 2005) – has resonance in the Canadian settler colonial context. In Canada, settler identity mostly serves as a barrier to reconciliation (Bell, 2014; Regan, 2010). I take as a central premise that Canada is a white settler colonial state, created for the benefit of European settlers on the unceded lands of Indigenous peoples (Alfred, 2005; Barker & Battell Lowman, 2016; Coulthard, 2014; Razack, 2002; A. Simpson, 2016; Tuck & Yang, 2012). As a settler and beneficiary of settler colonialism in Canada, I am responsible for working to dismantle the structures, institutions, and practices that serve to further entrench settler colonialism. In the words of historian Roger Epp, reconciliation is not a question of resolving "the "*Indian* problem" but rather the "settler problem"" (2008, p. 126). This dissertation is written in recognition of the more than 400 years of Indigenous peoples' resistance to settler colonialism, and with a commitment to Indigenous rights and self-determination, and Indigenous peoples' "right to this land, to sovereignty, and indeed, their right to exist beyond the often fetishized historical memory of settler colonialism" (Sium, Desai, & Ritskes, 2012, p. III).

[2] Peace and Conflict Studies is an interdisciplinary field that aims to understand why conflict and violence occur, so as to explore how that conflict can be transformed working towards building community and social justice.

Theoretical Perspective and Research Design

The understanding of settler colonial theory adopted in this dissertation serves as both the result of, and as an extension to, critical social theory more generally speaking. Critical research (or critical social theory, critical inquiry, critical theory) is a perspective on research that attempts to produce knowledge that can address issues of social inequities, power differentials, and social relations. By its nature, it is a research that challenges. Ngāti Awa and Ngāti Porou scholar Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2002) comments that it "…is really about focusing, about thinking critically, about reflecting on things, about being strategic. It is not simply about thinking yourself into a stationary position which often happens in the academy" (p. 184). In critical research, the very act of research can be understood as a form of praxis – of attempting to link the production of knowledge to positive social change.

Utilizing qualitative research tools, this research project is grounded in insights from both settler colonial and critical theory. In-depth interviews took place between May and December 2019, with twelve research participants who were identified as individuals working towards reconciliation in Winnipeg, Manitoba (MB). Participants were selected via a combination of purposive and snowball sampling. In-depth, open-ended interviews formed the primary source of data collection for the study to answer the research questions. Coding was conducted thematically, with the data then organized by three broad thematic areas, with several themes and sub-themes. The methods are detailed further in Chapter 4.

Significance of the Topic

Despite the education system's integral role in settler colonialism and in fostering "socially-sanctioned and cultivated colonial ignorance" (Schaefli, 2018, p. 3), public education

has also been heralded as the “first step” to reconciliation as a means of redressing history and acknowledging the importance of truth-telling (Kinew, Butera, & Sas, 2015; Sinclair, 2014b; Sinclair, Roberts, & Clyne, 2019). Indeed, education for reconciliation is a key component of the TRC’s Calls to Action (2015e, sections 62-66). As then Justice, and former Senator Murray Sinclair (cited in Watters, 2015) stated “education is what got us into this mess – the use of education at least in terms of residential schools – but education is the key to reconciliation.”

This study is significant for a number of reasons. It aims to address a number of theoretical silos. Settler colonialism has received scant attention in PACS and Transitional Justice fields, and yet both have much to contribute to the analysis of settler colonial relations and the prospects for intergroup reconciliation in the Canadian setting. By incorporating literature from settler colonial studies, education, transitional justice, and PACS, the knowledge gleaned from this project will advance theory, policy, and practice as it relates to reconciliation processes, with the potential to more effectively address harms against Indigenous peoples in settler colonial states and work towards reconciliation via the education system.

This project will also lay the groundwork for future research. While a recent survey suggests that support for reconciliation processes is waning among the settler population (Environics Institute for Survey Research, 2020), we also live in a context in which Indigenous activists, alongside other people of colour, are working tirelessly to shine a light on issues of racism in society and in education, as well as broader struggles for decolonization. This research project offers insights into the ways in which settlers may be able to mobilize to stand alongside Black, Indigenous and People of Colour (BIPOC) activists and scholars and the struggle for justice and equity. The study has also generated findings from those working towards

reconciliation that may be useful in other countries, both post-colonial and settler colonial, undertaking reconciliation processes. The findings add to an increasing body of knowledge on settler colonial relations and reconciliation in Canada. Future work will include an approach to develop a qualitative barometer of sorts of reconciliation, particularly as it relates to the young people living in Canada, and to broaden understandings of settler colonialism that incorporate the views of not only Indigenous peoples and white settlers, but also other settler groups in the country.

This work is timely and relevant. The Calls to Action released by the TRC in 2015 outline specific directives that can be taken to work towards education for reconciliation. The dissertation responds directly to and will generate insight on the TRC's Calls to Action, specifically Section 63 which outlines the need to identify the training needs required for educators teaching about Indigenous peoples in Canada, including settler colonialism, the history and legacy of the IRSS and Indigenous-settler relations (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015e, p. 8).

The depth and gravity of the harms committed against Indigenous peoples in Canada through settler colonialism and in particular the IRSS have had such a dramatic impact that at times, the question of reconciliation is perceived as an "Aboriginal problem." Senator Sinclair has repeatedly reminded us, however, reconciliation demands that Canadians see and accept the legacies of the IRSS not as an "Aboriginal problem" but rather as a Canadian problem (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015c). Settlers must be engaged in this process.

Organization of Dissertation

This dissertation is organized into 9 chapters. This first chapter outlines the purpose and objectives of this study, and importantly situates myself as the researcher. Chapter 2 of this dissertation presents a review of the literature as it relates to the key research concepts framing this study, including settler colonialism, transitional justice and reconciliation, and the role of the education system. Of central importance, identity is woven through each of these research concepts. In Chapter 3, I document the research approach employed in this dissertation, followed by a review of the research methods utilized in Chapter 4. The findings from this research study are documented over the course of four chapters, mirroring the research concepts presented previously, namely: settler colonial relations, transitional justice and reconciliation, as well as two chapters exploring the education system in reconciliation. Recommendations for policy and practice are woven in with the findings presented in Chapter 8, followed by a conclusion of the dissertation in Chapter 9, with a summary of the key findings and significance.

Chapter 2. Research Concepts

> *On Canada's 150th Anniversary Celebration*: This year [2017], the federal government plans to spend half a billion dollars on events marking Canada's 150th anniversary. Meanwhile, essential social services for First Nations people to alleviate crisis-level socio-economic conditions go chronically underfunded. Not only is Canada refusing to share the bounty of its own piracy; it's using that same bounty to celebrate its good fortune. Arguably, every firework, hot dog, and piece of birthday cake in Canada's 150th celebration will be paid for by the genocide of Indigenous peoples and cultures.
>
> - Pamela Palmater (2017)

Introduction

This chapter provides a detailed review of the literature. It begins with an overview of the terminology used in this study. Literature is then presented around the following topical areas: i) Settler Colonialism; ii) Education and Settler Colonialism; and iii) Transitional Justice and Reconciliation. Using an interdisciplinary lens, identity will serve as a key thread woven throughout each of the topical areas reviewed. This interdisciplinary and topical approach to the literature review is appropriate for the research aims and purpose, helping to inform data collection and analysis.

Tuhiwai Smith (1999/2012) explains that academic writing is a process of "selecting, arranging, and presenting knowledge. It privileges sets of texts, views about the history of an idea, what issues count as significant and by engaging in the same process uncritically, we too can render indigenous writers invisible or unimportant while reinforcing the validity of other writers" (p. 114). Indigenous activists and scholars have long been committed to the key tenets of what has now emerged as the discipline of settler colonial studies (through the influential

works of settler scholars such as Lorenzo Veracini and Patrick Wolfe as examples) and PACS (Snelgrove et al., 2014). As such, following Tuhiwai Smith's (1999/2012) advice, I have purposefully attempted to privilege Indigenous authors in this research project. When discussing the work of particular individuals, I have attempted wherever possible to acknowledge their identities as they define them. In some contexts, this includes also their field of study if it provides additional context to their work.

What's in a Name? Identities and Labels

As its central goal, this dissertation explores educators' understandings of Indigenous and settler relationships in Canada. It is about understanding how individuals from different social groups and living in social worlds, characterized by erasure and dispossession of Indigenous peoples, approach reconciliation in the educational sphere. In essence, it is about not only identity – "the names" and "the looks" and the ways in which those are conceived of by oneself and by others (Brah, 1996, p. 3) – but also how we as individuals and as groups attach to those identities in ways that can mask, represent, conceal, and at times embody deep structural and systemic inequalities. It is about identity politics – the "barriers specific groups face in their struggle for equality" (DiAngelo, 2018, p. xiii).

The words we use to refer to ourselves and others in these identity politics are complex and require clarification. This is particularly the case in settler colonial societies such as Canada, where terminology as it relates to the colonizer and the colonized, settlers and Indigenous peoples (and importantly the subject positions and social locations that those labels represent), is highly charged and fraught with controversy. Cree and Métis scholar Emma LaRocque (2010) summed up the challenges: "terminology about identities is a minefield, given this history of

stereotypes and legislative divisions, real cultural and historical differences" (p. 6). The labels applied to social groups change over time, and are reflective of the context in which we live – silenced histories and power imbalances have allowed for the majority to sanction the labels used to refer to the Other. Yet, there is a changing landscape, albeit slow, of consciousness in Canadian society. Throughout this research journey, my choice of language and terminology has become more nuanced, in part reflecting the development of the field, as well as the social, political, and research contexts from which I am drawing, but also my own journey of learning. During data collection, I mimicked the terminology used by research participants. The exception would be in those conversations where Indigenous participants used terminology or co-opted language that would be considered derogatory (and rightly so) for a white person to use.

I use the term "Indigenous peoples" to refer to First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples in recognition that they are the original inhabitants of occupied territory now known as Canada (as influenced by the work of Alfred & Corntassel, 2005; Coulthard, 2011b; Egan, 2011; Vowel, 2016). Taiaiake Alfred (Mohawk) and Jeff Corntassel (Cherokee) (2005) note that "the communities, clans, nations and tribes we call *Indigenous peoples* [emphasis in original] 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). Use of this terminology is an attempt to acknowledge the political nature of an identity that is continually shaped and reshaped in the context of settler colonial relations. The use of the plural peoples is deliberate in recognition of the cultural and linguistic diversity of Indigenous communities across Canada. Following the lead of settler Paulette Regan (2010), the term 'Indian' will be used only where context warrants (within single inverted commas) to reflect the

vernacular used in policy, literature, and the media (p. 240), and to refer to those legally recognized as 'Indian' under the Canadian federal government's *Indian Act*.

When I initially began this project, I relied on the term non-Indigenous to refer to settlers living in Canada. However, often times this label was used in a descriptive sense that masked the politicized nature of subject positions and privileges, and the resulting responsibilities that come with this privileged position. Leey'qsun Rachel Flowers (2015) cautions against the use of the term non-Indigenous stating that it can be too comfortable and neutral. Moreover, non-Indigenous is based "entirely on a *not-this* [emphasis in original] dichotomy" (Vowel, 2016, p. 15). And while non-Indigenous as a label can be useful in centring Indigenous peoples, it seemed inappropriate given that this research project is an attempt to highlight the responsibilities of settlers in Canada. As such, I avoid using non-Indigenous as synonymous with settler (except in those cases where it is directly quoted in the literature or by participants themselves) because as Flowers (2015) cautions, it can render settler an "empty signifier" void of both privileges and responsibilities (p. 33).

Rather, I will utilize the term "settler" to refer to non-Indigenous, European-Canadians who have come, or whose ancestors came to Canada, making Indigenous lands their home and source of capital and who now form the sociopolitical majority regardless of their social class (Regan, 2010, p. 240; Vowel, 2016). As a short-hand form of settler colonial, settler is meant to denote the deliberate occupation of Indigenous land, the assertion over land and resources, as well as the ways in which European laws and customs came to be applied to the sociopolitical structures and cultural relations in Canada, which were then applied to Indigenous peoples

(Barker, 2009; Battell Lowman & Barker, 2015; Vowel, 2016). In that way, it will be applied to individuals and groups, but also used as a reference to the Canadian settler state.

Like all labels, I recognize that settler is in many cases insufficient. Settler cannot adequately account for the experiences of those with hybrid identities that exist in most settler states (Barker, 2009; Webber & Grant, 2019) and the ways in which both privilege and oppression can intersect around different axes of difference. Moreover, LaRocque (2010) warns that the term settler can play into the *terra nullius* (i.e., nobody's land) narrative, further reinforcing a settler, Eurocentric narrative that depicts the land as vacant prior to the arrival of Europeans. This narrative conjures images of European settlers as the noble pioneers who endure hardships, suffering, and trauma to build the nation (Bertram, 2011, p. 168; Epp, 2003, p. 234), further contributing to the erasure of Indigenous peoples. As such, LaRocque (2010) prefers the term "re-settler" in recognition that Indigenous peoples were the original settlers, rooted in the land from which they were then disposed. Use of the term settler in this dissertation is not meant to encourage or reinforce a narrative of *terra nullius*; rather my decision to use this term is meant to reflect the relational and politicized nature of the label (Flowers, 2015; Vowel, 2016), but also as a tool – an identifier that can be used to confront the multilayered oppressions stemming from settler colonialism in Canada to urge work towards more equitable relations.

Emma Battell Lowman and Adam Barker (2015), who self-identify as settler Canadians as a means of acknowledging that they benefit from and indeed are complicit in settler colonialism, caution that using settler can cause discomfort among fellow settlers who struggle to recognize their complicity in the ongoing system of dispossession. Indeed, one only has to

look at the online comment section in a Canadian media article that utilizes the term settler to see the ways in which many settler Canadians take offence to the label (CBC Radio, 2018; Gilio-Whitaker, 2018a; Heath Justice, 2017) However, as Battell Lowman and Barker (2015) assert the label can "voice 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" (p. 2). Critiques regarding the potential discomfort, or settler fragility, with use of the term by those settlers who do not see themselves as implicated in settler colonial relations, is matched on the other end of the spectrum by critique that the term does not cause enough discomfort and may be inadequate, concealing both the historic and contemporary violence inflicted on Indigenous communities in settler colonial society (Bell, 2014, p. 7).

Settlement, as a facet of settler colonialism, continues today. As such, settler can and does apply to new waves of those making home on Indigenous lands, including those who are not European in origin. There is important debate about the extent to which people of colour are considered as settlers, including those from other colonial contexts who come to occupy Indigenous lands to seek enhanced privileges (Amadahy & Lawrence, 2009; Lawrence & Dua, 2005; Snelgrove et al., 2014). Initially, I advocated a view that saw all those who were not Indigenous to Canada as settlers. Following the lead of scholar and author Albert Memmi (1991), who self-identifies as a Jewish Arab, with roots in Tunisia and France (Roberts, 2020), I did not distinguish between settlers born in settler states and immigrants, refugees, or migrants who more recently came to occupy or settle on Indigenous lands. However, the interconnected nature of oppression against BIPOC ultimately works to reinforce white settler societies, to the detriment of those racialized groups (Cantave, Mir, Howard, & Habtom, 2016; T. L. King, 2019;

Latty, Scribe, Peters, & Morgan, 2016; Webber & Grant, 2019) and following the lead of Jodi Byrd (Chikasaw Nation), I now recognize that settler is a status that is imbued with whiteness (2011). As such, settler will not be used to refer to those forced settler groups (including the descendants of Africans who were sold into chattel slavery) who experience the weight of systemic oppression given that while they may make Canada their home, they cannot be agents of settlement to the extent that they have power to impose their cultural, political, and legal conditions in Canadian spaces, and as such, arrivant is more appropriate (T. L. King, 2019; Tuck, Guess, & Sultan, 2014; Vowel, 2016). Thus, while arrivants may have settled in Canada, "not all settlers are created equal" (Snelgrove et al., 2014, p. 6); settler colonialism relies on differentiated forms of subject formation and privilege, with whiteness in a hegemonic and normalized status (Grande, 2004, p. 107; Lovell, 2007, p. 3).

I also utilize the identifier white (purposefully in lower case) as part of the settler terminology, as a means of both identifying and specifying whiteness as a system of power and privilege. Perhaps even more so than settler, the language of whiteness and of acknowledging whiteness can be a source of great discomfort (Cineas & Kendi, 2021; Kendi, 2019; Vowel, 2016). While whiteness as a construct has been critiqued for its potential for being essentializing and totalizing, it is intricately linked to settler colonialism (Carr, 2016; Green, Sonn, & Matsebula, 2007; Leonardo, 2009; Lund & Carr, 2010; Paris, 2019; Schick, 2014). The use of this identifier also reflects the language used by the majority of participants, Indigenous and settler, in the research project.

The term western (or the west) is also used in this study as a descriptive term to refer to the particular ontological, epistemological, sociological, and ideological ways of thinking. In this

regard, I follow the lead of Margaret Kovach, of Plains Cree and Saulteaux ancestry (2005, 2009), and have chosen not to capitalize the term to both de-emphasize the perceived unity and homogeneity of the west, but more importantly for the purpose of this project, as a deliberate attempt not to further privilege western thought especially to the exclusion of Indigenous ontologies, epistemologies, and methodologies. The term Indigenous however, will be capitalized.

Postcolonial feminist scholar Sunera Thobani (2007) warns "western ontologies have long been based in binary constructions with the self being constituted in relation to its excluded Other" (p. 5). The use of binaries can be problematic, in this case serving to cast the settler and Indigene in opposition to each other (as well as western and Indigenous), reducing both to singular roles in a colonial relationship (Bell, 2014, pp. 10-15). By focusing on binaries, there is a danger of minimizing the ways in which individuals and collectives work to negotiate and resist these classifications (Bell, 2014, p. 16). However, these binary labels have resonance in understanding social relations, power asymmetries, and settler colonialism in Canada. The various institutions and actors of settler colonial states, operating at the macro, meso, and micro levels, work to (re)produce the dichotomy between the identities of settlers and Indigenous peoples, emphasizing difference, and reproducing ideologies that foster exclusion (Bell, 2014; Lovell, 2007). Moreover, the relevance of these labels is particularly salient considering social location, demonstrating various degrees of privilege and deprivation. However, careful attention must be paid so as not to abstract the categories of settler and Indigenous from the complexities of intersecting axes of difference and social location.

Identity Studies

As a core concept, identity began emerging in the social sciences and humanities literature in the 1950s, and has since become one of the most widely used terms (Spady, 2017; Wetherell, 2010) appearing in scholarly works from diverse fields of inquiry. PACS is no exception. Identity has been applied to a varied set of phenomena, functioning as a theoretical concept, a typology, and an analytical tool (Stryker & Burke, 2000; Tuck & Yang, 2017). Yet despite its ubiquitous nature to explain a wide range of social experiences and processes, identity remains ambiguous and imprecise (Tuck & Yang, 2017) and is "notoriously elusive and difficult to define" (Wetherell, 2010, p. 3).

When identity as a concept entered academia, there was almost immediately a bifurcation between personal, or self-identity, and collective, or social identity, which influenced the development of the field (Gleason, 1983). Identity as a personal project was influenced by the broad set of discourses that shaped modernity (Alcoff, 2010; Ashcroft, Griffiths, & Tiffin, 1998, p. 77), with a focus on the self as an autonomous person, with specific attributes (Tajfel, 1972), core constructs (Kelly, 1955), and sense of personal place and subjective individual achievement (Wetherell 2010, 8). Beginning in the 1960s, and influenced by the social justice movements of the times, research burgeoned on those identities afforded by social location and membership in social groups (Wetherell, 2010, p. 7). Social identity (i.e., collective identity) refers to knowledge of ourselves and our self-image as derived from salient membership in a social group (Reicher, Spears, & Haslam, 2010, p. 48; Stets & Burke, 2000; Tajfel, 1972). Group membership in this sense can be ascribed by others, or avowed through affiliation, and can refer to both informal and formal social groupings and subgroups. The

emphasis on identity as a relational construct highlights the ways in which we define who we are as a function of the construction of sameness with group members, the differences between group members and the Other (Bauman & Vecchi, 2004), as well as the ongoing institutionalization of those relations of sameness and difference (Powell & Peristerakis, 2014, p. 73). At a conceptual level, theories of social identity serve to transform the concept from its roots in social psychology.

The dynamics of identity and identity formation. Identities are complex, fluid, and historically-bound (Black, 2003; Cook-Huffman, 2009, p. 19; Coulthard, 2014, p. 17), acquiring significance and meaning within specific contexts and socio-cultural milieus (Amundsen, 2018; Lawrence, 2004, p. 11; 2010). Identity mediates, and is mediated by, culture; the beliefs, knowledges, practices, and symbols that are learned and shared, shaping our worldview, ways of life, and lived experience (Avruch, 1998; Rosaldo, 2006). Culture – heterogeneous, dynamic, and in flux – is a defining feature of identity, contributing to how individuals see themselves, the groups with which they identify (as well as those groups they do not identify with). Culture, with language as the "conveyor of culture" (Kirmayer, Brass, & Tait, 2000, p. 613) gives meaning to our identities (Deaux, 2006; Grimson, 2010).

Identity helps people understand who they are as individuals, as occupiers of particular roles, and as members of specific groups (Cook-Huffman, 2009, p. 20). Yellowknives Dene scholar Glen Coulthard (2014) references the work of German philosopher Georg Wilhelm Hegel (1807) and French West Indian philosopher Frantz Fanon (2008) to assert that our identities are formed intersubjectively, through our complex social interactions with others (pp. 17-27). In this way, identities are constructed within specific social relationships, through a

multiplicity of processes and lived experiences, and in a particular time and space (Brah, 2007, p. 142; Cook-Huffman, 2009, p. 20). The idea that we define our identities in social interactions and relationships (both through dialogue with, and in struggle against others) is a key point that while is now commonplace, stood in stark contrast to traditional liberal views of identity formation (c.f. literature on primordial and rational choice models of identity formation) (Coulthard, 2014, p. 27).

The meanings associated with identities provide a narrative sense of self, formed from both those relations that are present and those that are not, and are the product of a collective past, present, and future (Cook-Huffman, 2009, p. 20; Reicher et al., 2010, p. 45). Identity pulls together conscious, strategic, political, and social acts, as well as more difficult to articulate, unconscious, and embedded ways of life (Brah, 2007, pp. 142-143). Identities are practiced and lived. Identities, and the stories that serve to form and flow from them (Pelletier, 2013), mobilize individuals and collectives and serve to both legitimize and justify individual and group aspirations and action (Cook-Huffman, 2009, p. 19; Doerfler, 2015; Senehi, 2009). Identities are value-driven (Flaherty, 2012, p. 190) and attached with emotional significance (Tajfel, 1972, p. 31).

Identity is not some abstract phenomenon but rather serves as a means through which individuals and groups establish, maintain and protect a sense of predictability, purpose, and cohesion (Brah, 1996, 2007; Cook-Huffman, 2009, p. 20; Doerfler, 2015; Northrup, 1989, p. 63). Indeed, in a study undertaken for the Canadian Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, psychologist J.W. Berry notes that identity was the “core of their [Indigenous Peoples’] existence” (Berry, 1996, p. 3). Identities are instrumental in that they serve to equip individuals

with a filter for organizing events and for situating others within the larger fabric of society (Black, 2003, p. 149; Macleod, 2009, p. 250). A strong sense of identity – both personal and social – can foster positive development and a sense of belonging, purpose, and self-worth (Berry, 1999; Dockery, 2010; McKeown, Cavdar, & Taylor, 2020). Moreover, in contexts where identity is contested or oppressed, a strong sense of identity – a sense of who one is in relationship to the world – can serve as an important determinant of health and well-being (Auger, 2016; Kirmayer et al., 2000), and can work to increase the agency of oppressed groups (Durie, 1999). So essential is identity that its protection and promotion has been integrated into the recommendations of bodies such as transitional justice mechanisms, public health, and educational initiatives. Its recognition and protection has been codified in legal conventions and statues (though often in a western, individualistic and restricted manner) such as the *United Nations* (UN) *Convention on the Rights of the Child* (1989) and the *UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* (UNDRIP) (2007).[3]

[3] The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) was passed by the UN General Assembly in late 2007. UNDRIP consists of 46 articles that recognize the individual and collective rights of Indigenous peoples around the world, including the right of Indigenous peoples for self-determination (Lightfoot, 2019a). It is the culmination of decades' long activism at the grassroots by Indigenous peoples and communities. Canada was one of only four countries to vote against UNDRIP at the United Nations in 2007, the first time it had ever stood in opposition to an international human rights standard (the other countries were also settler colonial states including Australia, New Zealand, and the United States). While the Declaration does not carry the force of law, it sets out standards for the conduct of nation-states in working with Indigenous peoples. UNDRIP centres self-determination, anti-discrimination, and decolonization. As a prominent theme, it disputes doctrines of racial superiority that were used to justify the dispossession of Indigenous peoples from their lands, and calls for work to repair and remedy the harms that resulted from that dispossession (Lightfoot, 2019a). UNDRIP figures prominently into the TRC's Calls to Action (2015e). The TRC called on provincial and territorial, alongside the federal government to endorse and fully implement UNDRIP as a "framework" for all other reconciliation measures at "all levels and across all sectors of society" (2015e, pp. 190-191). In May 2016, Indigenous Affairs Minister Carolyn Bennett officially removed Canada's objector status at the UN (Fontaine, 2016). Most recently, the province of British Columbia has committed to aligning its laws with UNDRIP (Tk̓emlúps Chief and Council, 2019). However, the selective and limited implementation of UNDRIP remains cause for concern.

Social identity and conflict. Identities shape, and are shaped by, processes and sites of social struggle. The relationship between social identity and conflict may be described as a mutually constitutive cycle where deep-rooted conflict and rigidly-defined social identities "may easily cause each other to intensify" (Black, 2003, p. 165). Thus, while conflict can result from clashing social identities, so too can identity be the "product of conflict" generated and sustained by both latent and overt conflict, direct and structural (i.e., violence that prevents people from meeting their basic needs) violence (Black, 2003, p. 149). Conflict can become encoded in identity and identity formation (Northrup, 1989).

PACS aims to further our understanding of social conflict by understanding attempts to satisfy collective identity needs while also creating, defining, nurturing, and protecting key social identities (Byrne, 2001; Cook-Huffman, 2009; Northrup, 1989). Three of those key theoretical approaches – basic human needs, protracted social conflict, and social identity theory – are outlined in the section that follows as encompassing of the range of theoretical approaches offered by PACS to understand social conflict and identities, as well as efforts to resolve those conflicts, in contemporary society.

Basic human needs. In attempting to understand intergroup conflict, Australian PACS scholar John Burton (1990, 1997) articulated a theory of intractable conflict which stated that the struggle to satisfy basic needs serves as a key motivational factor behind human behaviour and social interaction (cited in Cook-Huffman, 2009, p. 22; Jeong, 2000, p. 71). Basic needs include those needs that are essential not only to our individual physical and biological well-being, but also psychological and social well-being, such as the rights of individuals and collectives to "maintain their identities, to gain equal recognition and to have equal status with

other groups" (Rothman & Olson, 2001, p. 290). The thwarting of basic identity needs is often operationalized through both structural and symbolic violence, including denying the ability to develop a collective identity, have that identity acknowledged or recognized, and fair access to the systems and structures that support the conditions for building identity (Cook-Huffman, 2009, p. 23; Jeong, 2000, pp. 20-30). Burton's theory posits that when universal and non-negotiable needs such as personal development, security, recognition, and identity are unmet, there is a basis for conflict (Cook-Huffman, 2009). Identity needs, because they are perceived as non-negotiable, cannot be divided, and as such, traditional conflict resolution models are likely to fail (Azar, 1986; Cook-Huffman, 2009).

Protracted social conflict. Influenced by the work of Burton, Lebanese PACS scholar Edward Azar (1986, 1990) aimed to extend basic human needs theory as a means for understanding protracted social conflicts as being inextricably linked to, and fundamentally connected with, issues of collective identity – including the ability not only to develop that identity, but to have that identity recognized and protected by others, as well as access to systems that supported the building of that identity. Azar advocated for an approach to understanding conflict dynamics that had as its level of analysis the identity group (Ramsbotham, 2005). He believed his theory could be applied in post-colonial settings given that colonial state structures had been dominated by one identity group to the exclusion of others (Azar, 1990). This inequality, and failure to respond to the needs of the identity group can exacerbate perceptions of relative deprivation, serving as a source of, and factor that can fuel, conflict (Jeong, 2000, pp. 69-71). Discontent will continue to foment when the legitimate needs of the identity continue to be blocked by actors, systems, and/or institutions, fostering

frustration, fragmentation, and a lack of system legitimacy (Cook-Huffman, 2009). There is thus a potential for increased intergroup conflict with collective identity mobilized and used instrumentally for political purposes (Black, 2003).

Social identity theory. Writing in the 1970s, Polish social psychologist Henri Tajfel (1972) developed social identity theory as an attempt to explore how actors understand themselves in the social world, and the ways in which social conduct (including identity) is dependent on social context, rather than as a product of individual tendencies (Reicher et al., 2010, p. 46). Such an approach highlights the salient nature of identity. Tajfel proposed a view of social behavior as existing along a continuum from interpersonal to intergroup behavior, and asserted that in conflict situations, social identity may function to the exclusion of personal identity (cited in Northrup 1989, 66).

Social identity theory is in essence a theory of social power in the context of social change (Reicher et al., 2010, p. 51). Tajfel was concerned with understanding the minimal conditions necessary to produce situations of negativity towards out-groups, regardless of the conditions of competition between the groups, and concluded that individuals displayed high levels of in-group favouritism (cited in Reicher et al., 2010, p. 47). For Tajfel, these conclusions demonstrated that in certain situations, we define ourselves not in relation to other individuals, as was common in the literature, but rather through the groups that we belong to, and in this way, social identity served to influence group behavior (Cook-Huffman, 2009, p. 24; Northrup, 1989, p. 66; Reicher et al., 2010, p. 47). An important implication of Tajfel's work is the notion that social identity provides a conduit through which society inhabits the subject, explaining how large numbers of people can act in meaningful ways by reference to shared norms and

values. Moreover, social identity theory points to the ways in which an individual's self-esteem can be attached not only to a sense of personal achievement, but also in terms of the fate of the group, which is comparative and competitive in nature in relation to other groups.

While each of the theoretical approaches outlined above is relevant to the ways in which identity has played a role in contributing to interpersonal and intergroup conflict, these theoretical approaches (and PACS more generally speaking) fails to adequately account for the ongoing permanence of settler colonialism, and of the power dynamics, inequities, and oppression that is waged against Indigenous populations and against Indigenous identities as an inherent feature of settler colonialism as demonstrated in the sections that follow.

Settler Colonialism: A Theoretical Overview

Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels (1848/1998) projected that "the need of a constantly expanding market for its product chases the bourgeoisie over the whole surface of the globe, so that it must nestle everywhere, settle everywhere, establish connections everywhere" (p. 39). Writing in 1848, Marx and Engels were pointing to the global and transnational nature of a system of colonial intervention, a system that was dependent on local circumstances and opportunities (cited in Veracini, 2010, p. 3). Thus emerged different modes of empire which served to create different relationships and social structures in the colonies in which they operated (Veracini, 2011). Colonialism is a process of "exogenous domination and a specific demographic balance" (Georges Balandier cited in Veracini, 2010, p. 4) that is characterized by displacement and unequal relations (Wolfe, 2006). It entails a foreign minority ruling over the majority, which is usually racially, ethnically, and/or culturally diverse from the demographic characteristics of the metropole (Veracini, 2010, pp. 4-6). In the dominant Canadian social

imaginary, it is this form of colonialism – external to Canada and historic – that prevails perpetuated by narratives and tropes (Donald, 2012). Settler colonialism must not be viewed as a historical occurrence given that "…while there are beginnings, there is no end" (Hixon, 2013, p. 2). Settler colonialism is ongoing and pervasive. It transcends time and place with settler colonial presence acknowledged in Australia, Canada, China, Israel, Japan, New Zealand, Russia, South Africa, the United States, and several countries in the Latin American context as some examples (Lahti, 2018).

Settler colonialism, or "the colonies proper" as referred to by Marx and Engels (cited in Veracini, 2010, p. 1), is a mode of colonial action whereby "outsiders come to stay and establish territorialized sovereign political orders" (Veracini, 2007, p. 1) on an expropriated land base. In the oft-quoted line – settler colonialism "is a structure, not an event" (Wolfe, 2006, p. 388), unfolding in a series of stages including initial dispossession, as well as subsequent dispossessions of Indigenous peoples from the land to support settler hegemony (Alfred, 2009a; Balint, Evans, & McMillan, 2014). It includes multidimensional projects of settlement and nation-building that implicate different populations in different ways (Barker, 2009; Coulthard, 2014; Simpson, 2007; Tuck & Yang, 2012). It is a "violent act of geography" that involves the theft of land, and dispossession and erasure of Indigenous presence on that land by settlers who turn the land "into space and then into place again" (Veracini, 2017, p. 5), resembling the homes, and political, legal, economic, and social order they left behind (Shear & Krutka, 2018). Throughout the ongoing settlement process, settlers systematically disavow or deny the sovereignty of Indigenous peoples "either by signing treaties they do not intend to honour, or by asserting different versions of the *terra nullius* doctrine" (Veracini, 2015, p. 41)

Australian anti-colonial scholar Patrick Wolfe (1999) further explores the distinction between colonial and settler colonial formations, explaining that settler colonialism is not a master-servant relationship marked by racial or ethnic difference, nor a relationship characterized by the indispensability of colonized people. Rather, settler colonialism is premised on the dispensability of Indigenous peoples, emphasizing not necessarily their exploitation, but rather, their erasure and replacement (Wolfe cited in Tuck & Yang, 2012; Veracini, 2010, p. 9). Unlike colonization that aimed to permanently exploit the surplus value to be gained from Indigenous labour and resources, the primary object of settler colonization is the appropriation, and subsequent settling of, the land itself (Tuck & Yang, 2012; Veracini, 2007, p. 8; Wolfe, 1999, p. 163; 2006, p. 388). And while colonial agents will often return to the metropole, in settler colonial circumstances, settlers on expropriated land have "come to stay" (Veracini, 2013, p. 313). Historian Nancy Shoemaker (2015) rejects the division between colonialism and settler colonialism, and instead proposes a typology of colonialism that sees settler colonialism as just one variation of colonialism. However, while there may be overlap between settler colonial and colonial forms, as well as contexts where the two operate simultaneously, and with intersecting systems of domination (Grande, 2004, p. 118), settler colonialism is not colonialism (Veracini, 2007; Wolfe, 2006). This study advocates a view of settler colonialism as a distinct colonial mode; yet one that interacts and intersects with other modes of colonial operation.

Settler colonialism is a territorial project (Rowe & Tuck, 2017; A. Simpson, 2014; Wolfe, 1999). It is the accumulation and seizure of land, space, and place that drives the settler colonial project with a "sustained institutional tendency to eliminate the Indigenous

population" (Wolfe, 1999, p. 163). "Land/water/air/subterranean earth…is what is most valuable, contested, required" (Tuck & Yang, 2012, p. 5). Thus, creates 'the problem' of settler colonialism – namely, "the Indigenous life already living on that land" (A. Simpson, 2014, p. 19). For the settler, land is important not only as a new home as well as a source of capital (Tuck & Yang, 2012), but also for its symbolic and ideological connection (Lawrence, 2010, p. 513). For Indigenous peoples, the connection to land goes beyond mere usefulness or reliance. Rather "territory is an essential part of their group formation process and its removal represents a dire threat to the ability of these groups to reproduce a group identity" (Peter Kulchyski, as cited in Woolford, 2009, p. 89). Thus, settlement of the land is inherently violent. Dispossession of Indigenous peoples from their land serves to disrupt Indigenous relationships to the land representing a "profound epistemic, ontological, cosmological violence" (Tuck & Yang, 2012, p. 5), alongside physical, cultural, and structural violence.

Settler colonialism informs a range of colonial practices that may otherwise appear as distinct. Alfred and Corntassel (2005) use the term "shape-shifting colonialism" (p. 601) to describe the ways in which imperial powers may change their form or expression, often in response to perceived signs of weakness among Indigenous resistance that can be exploited (Tully, 2000, p. 40). Similarly, this shape-shifting can be seen in the United States context where the settler colonial state moved from "accommodation to annihilation to inclusion of Indigenous peoples" (Goldstein, 2014, p. 9).

Scholars and activists Eve Tuck (Unangax) and K. Wayne Yang (2014) describe settler colonialism as characterized by a triad relationship between the white settler (and processes of settlement), Indigenous peoples (and processes of erasure) and the chattel-slave (as an

ascribed structural positions resulting from processes of enslavement) (p. 224). However, this configuration is not a closed triad of fixed subject positions or relations, or singular, unitary analyses (Tuck, Guess, et al., 2014). Of crucial importance in the triad relationship is the set of relations not only with each other, but also in the relationships to place. The permanence of settler colonial structures results from the "interplay of erasure, bodies, land, and violence" (Tuck & Yang, 2014, p. 224) so that while the origins of settler colonialism lie in the dispossession of Indigenous peoples from the land and the formation of racial hierarchies, as a process, it encompasses those direct and indirect actions through which the beliefs, values, and practices of the settlers – the colonizing group – come to be imposed on Indigenous peoples (Hart & Rowe, 2014). As it evolves, settler society comes to be influenced by the merger of cultural (Lovell, 2007, p. 4), gendered (Arvin, Tuck, & Morrill, 2013; Morgensen, 2011, 2013) and racial hierarchies (Razack, 2002, p. 1; Wolfe, 2006). The cumulative result of these settler colonial processes has led to the privileging and normalization of whiteness and heteropatriarchy in settler states (Baldwin, Cameron, & Kobayashi, 2011; Grande, 2004; Leonardo, 2009; Schick, 2014). It is these process that "hinder, if not stop, Indigenous peoples, individually and as nations, from making decisions about Indigenous lives including how, if at all, they choose to incorporate the ideas, beliefs, values, and practices of other peoples" (Hart, Straka, & Rowe, 2017, p. 333).

Dispossession serves to disavow the presence of the Indigenous Other, with the settler state working to extinguish any claims of the Other to the land (Tuck & Yang, 2014, p. 224). And whereas colonialism works to reinforce the distinction between colony and metropole, settler colonialism aims to erase that same distinction, to "cover its tracks" (Veracini, 2011, p. 3). In

erasing that distinction between colony and metropole however, settler colonial structures will often attempt to recuperate, appropriate, and co-opt elements of Indigenous culture, as a symbolic approach to express its independence from the original metropole, as well as an attempt to placate Indigenous resistance to those hegemonic structures (Bell, 2014; Grande, 2004, p. 94; Schick, 2014; Wolfe, 2006, p. 389). The simultaneous celebration and the paradoxical erasure of difference is a central tenet of the Canadian nationhood narrative (Schick, 2014, p. 94). It also creates a space in which settlers can deny their own histories (Hixon, 2013), and "by allowing the predominant settler population to not recognize itself as one" (Crow, 2017, p. 95), creating the conditions through which settler denial, ignorance, complacency, and resentment can foment. It is only by naming the violence and oppressions wrought by settler colonialism that we can begin to dismantle them (Sabzalian & Shear, 2018).

Settler colonialism operates at multiple levels of analysis, impacting different communities, in different ways, at different times. Settler sociologist and genocide scholar Andrew Woolford (2014; 2013) proposes a conceptualization of settler colonialism as a "series of nets, or networks, formed by linkages between actors and institutions at macro, meso and micro levels" (Benvenuto et al., 2014, p. 13) which operate together to form the colonial mesh. The widest net (the macro level) includes the dominant structures of society (i.e., economy, government) that operate in such a fashion so as to define the dominant vision of a society. This broad net, however, is only able to function insofar as there are smaller nets. These more regionally-focused nets representing the meso level, include the various institutions (e.g., law, education, health) that will serve to enact the dominant vision for the state through the implementation of policies. The smallest, and most localized layer of netting – the micro –

accounts for more community-based actions and initiatives that connect individuals and collectives to the institutional nets. Together, these nets serve to form a colonial mesh that operate in different ways across time and place, tightening and loosening in different ways, serving to constrain or enable agency and resistance (Woolford, 2014, pp. 31-32). This multi-level approach serves as a useful tool for understanding not only the broad patterns of settler colonialism but also the divergence in settler colonialism's applications and manifestations and diversity of lived experiences including resistance at the individual and community levels (Logan, 2015; Rifkin, 2014, p. 10) and will help to frame the findings of this study.

Settler colonialism in Canada. In Canada, settler colonialism and the history of settler nation-building extends to the 15th and 16th century with the arrival of European settlers on territory that was home to diverse sovereign Indigenous groups with well-established economic, social, and political systems (Dickason & Newbigging, 2010; Hart & Rowe, 2014; Mann, 2005; Manuel & Posluns, 1974; Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015c, pp. 47-53). This pattern of settlement in the Canadian setting reflected a broader trend of mass migration, trade, conquest, and violence where colonial states gained control of Indigenous lands in countries around the world. Initial interactions between Indigenous groups and European settlers brought benefits, albeit in different ways, to both groups, with European settlement successful in large part due to the support offered by Indigenous communities. However, over time, this relationship of mutuality shifted to one of inequity and oppression with the forcible displacement of Indigenous peoples from their ancestral lands, dismantlement of Indigenous governance systems, introduction of disease, systemic and systematic

discrimination, assimilationist policies, and genocide (Dickason & McNab, 2009; Hart & Rowe, 2014; Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015c).

The *Royal Proclamation of 1763*, issued by King George III, set out the terms of engagement for settlement. Through the Proclamation, the Crown was identified as the only legitimate force to enter in treaty negotiations when it stated that "… if, at any time, any of the said Indians should be inclined to *dispose* [emphasis added] of the said Lands, that same shall be purchased only for Us, in Our Name" (cited in Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1996, p. 684). The Proclamation reflected a shift from relationships of mutuality. It cemented the perceived inferiority of Indigenous peoples to European settlers, and by 1870, numbered treaties were negotiated by the imperial state (Dickason & McNab, 2009; Kovach, 2009, p. 159). This paternalistic oppression of Indigenous peoples occurred alongside the economic decline of many previously independent economies as Indigenous peoples were drawn into the European fur trade. As such, in a relatively short time frame, the "balance of power had shifted to favour settlers" (Hart & Rowe, 2014, p. 24). The activities of the settlers (be they explorers, agents of the metropole, traders, farmers, corporations, or missionaries) and the imperialist state set the stage for "expansionary wars, the negotiation and the breaking of Treaties, attempts at cultural assimilation, and the exploitation and marginalization of the original inhabitants of the colonized lands" (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015c, p. 47). The role of the Churches in these processes cannot be underestimated, providing not only the moral justification for colonization as a 'civilizing mission,' but also directly participating by sending missionaries (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015c, p. 51).

Born out of the *Royal Proclamation of 1763*, the *Indian Act* (1876) is a body of colonial law comprised of previous legislation and amendments.[4] The *Act* excludes Métis and Inuit from its operation, meaning that the Métis and Inuit (despite their recognition as Indigenous peoples under Section 35 of the *Constitution Act*) do not have Indian status, nor the rights conferred by this status. The *Indian Act* permeates all aspects of First Nations peoples' lives, from "the registering of birth of a 'live Indian' to disposing of the property of 'deceased Indians'" (Lawrence, 2010, p. 515). The *Indian Act* permitted the colonial government to determine the legal rights of First Nations, including rights as it pertains to land and other resources.[5] It established the reserve system, with paternalism ingrained in the system, displacing status Indians onto small tracts of land classed as federal lands, with limited resources and little autonomy. The pass system, as an informal administrative policy, worked to further regulate the ability of status Indians to leave their reserves, even if only for short periods. The establishment of the reserve system had the intent of not only displacement, but also of introducing colonial ways of life to Indigenous communities, such as ownership of private property.

The administration of the *Indian Act* also created the legal construct of *Indian*, deeming Indigenous peoples as "wards of the state" rather than as partners (Romanow, 2020, p. 2). The *Indian Act* served to control Indigenous identity through the imposition of a state-constructed racial category of status 'Indian' which is "the only category of Indigenous person with whom

[4] Previous legislation includes: the *Act for the Better Protection of the Lands and Property of the Indians in Lower Canada (1850), Constitution Act (1867) and the Gradual Enfranchisement Act (1869).*

[5] For more information, see: Alfred (2009a), Borrows (2002, 2008), Ladner (2014), Lawrence (2003, 2004, 2010), Manuel and Posluns (1974), Satzewich (1997, 2011), and Simpson (2011).

an historic nation-to-nation relationship with Canada is recognized" (Lawrence, 2010, p. 515). The *Indian Act* has served as the instrument to regulate the relationship between the federal government and status Indians and made it possible for the state to administer policies and legislation aimed at controlling Indigenous peoples. By establishing a legal definition of 'Indian' and how that legal identity status can be conferred and inherited, the *Act* controls the lives of those with 'Indian' status, while also excluding vast numbers of Indigenous peoples from obtaining or retaining this official identity status, and the band membership that goes along with it (Lawrence, 2010, p. 515).The *Indian Act* deems being 'Indian' as something that could be removed from an individual for any number of reasons (e.g., serving in armed forces, working in a professional capacity, or leaving the reserve for any length of time) (Lawrence, 2004, p. 31). In this way, 'Indians' would become colonial citizens, relinquishing collective ties to their communities, as well as claims to their land (Lawrence, 2010, p. 516). The *Indian Act* provided for the simultaneous operation of dispossession and assimilation into a colonial society, and was a mechanism through which the settler state could actively maintain control of the land. As Mi'kmaw scholar Bonita Lawrence (2004) explains "…[T]he only way in which Indigenous peoples can be permanently severed from their land base is when they no longer exist as peoples" (p. 38).

The *Gradual Enfranchisement Act* (1869), which was incorporated into the *Indian Act,* is symbolic of the goal of assimilation by the colonial state (cited in Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1996, pp. 252-254). The *Gradual Enfranchisement Act* used notions of descent to limit Indianness so that blood, or more specifically blood quantum, became a central criterion for defining who was authentically 'Indian' (Dennison, 2012; Doerfler, 2015; Lawrence,

2004; TallBear, 2013). This miscegenationist approach meant that those with less than one-quarter Indian blood were no longer eligible for the annuities or funds designated for Indigenous peoples (Lawrence, 2010, p. 516) and could be used as a means through which to dispossess Indigenous peoples of their land and resources, and rupture familial and community bonds and obligations. The blood-quantum citizenship requirement was based on western pseudoscientific theories of race that held that the more white blood an 'Indian' had, the more they were to be socially, culturally and politically assimilated, even if not on equal ground (Doerfler, 2015, Loc. 239; TallBear, 2013). Settler scholar Tony Barta (2008) writing on Australia, explains that "the question of race calculated into fractions was plain sense to Europeans of the time" (p. 202). It was thought to be an impartial and accurate means with which to measure identity, that avoided the "complexities posed by Native customs and epistemologies" (Doerfler, 2015, Loc. 475).

Though beyond the scope of this study, the manner in which gender discrimination was used to eliminate Indianness is of profound importance (Lawrence, 2003, 2004; Monture-Angus, 1999). Under the *Indian Act,* Indianness increasingly came to be defined through patrilineal relations, to be acquired by women through their fathers or husbands, and women who married anyone not considered as status 'Indian', along with their dependents, lost their status, and were forcibly removed from reserves by Indian agents (Lawrence, 2010, p. 516). When the *Indian Act* was modernized in 1951, some of the more repressive laws were removed and yet for women, revisions were made that only served to further diminish their identity as Indigenous women. For instance, upon marriage to a non-Indian man, women would be compulsorily enfranchised, losing all legal connection to territory. After much lobbying and legal

action, particularly by Indigenous women and women's organizations, Bill C-31 was introduced which proposed to amend the *Indian Act* to return status to those who lost it as a result of forced enfranchisement. In 1985, *Bill C-31* was passed and the *Indian Act* amended so that Indian women who had married out, along with their children, would be re-instated (Lawrence, 2003). However, gender discrimination still remains in the *Indian Act* through rules of descent. Also problematic, is that the normalization of gender discrimination under the *Act* has seeped into the worldviews of Indigenous communities, so that the very notion of who is considered to be "mixed blood" is shaped by gender (Lawrence, 2003, p. 15).

Despite a number of revisions, the *Indian Act* remains in place today and serves to control Indigenous identity. Despite being an oppressive piece of legislation imposed by the state, the *Indian Act* is also the dominant legal and political mechanism that recognizes and affirms the distinctiveness of status 'Indians' in Canada and their corresponding rights. The *1969 White Paper*, which attempted to dismantle the *Act* by calling for a full-scale assimilation policy, was criticized as an attempt by the federal government to disavow the state's obligations to First Nations peoples, and erase the legal and constitutional standing of Indigenous peoples (Kovach, 2009, p. 160). The *White Paper* went directly against the expressed concerns of First Nations communities who had taken part in the federal government's national program of consultation raising issues in terms of treaty rights, land title, self-determination, and access to education and healthcare (First Nations Studies Program, 2009; Manuel & Derrickson, 2015). Indigenous peoples rallied against the *White Paper*, which was later abandoned. Harold Cardinal (1999), then leader of the Indian Association of Alberta,

summed up the conundrum faced by Indigenous peoples in rejecting the *White Paper* in favour of maintaining the *Indian Act:*

> We do not want the *Indian Act* retained because it is a good piece of legislation. It isn't. It is discriminatory from start to finish. But it is a lever in our hands and an embarrassment to the government, as it should be. No just society and no society with even pretensions to being just can long tolerate such a piece of legislation, but we would rather continue to live in bondage under the inequitable *Indian Act* than surrender our sacred rights. Any time the government wants to honour its obligations to us we are more than happy to help devise new Indian legislation (p. 140).

The *Indian Act* remains both discriminatory and paternalistic, and First Nations communities and the settler state remains at odds on how and if the *Indian Act* should be reformed (Provart, 2003), dismantled in partnership with First Nations communities (Canadian Press, 2019), or abolished (c.f. Russel Diabo (2017)) (Palmater, 2019a).

Identity studies and settler colonialism. Identity studies has long been plagued by a divide between essentialism and non-essentialism. Essentialism is the view that for any given social entity, there are particular attributes that are exclusive to all members (Ashcroft et al., 1998, p. 77; Woodward, 1997, p. 13). A traditional essentialist approach presents identity as fixed and unchanging, relating to a set of biological sources and markers that constitute the subject (Woodward, 1997, p. 12), who is defined in opposition to difference (Fuss, 1989). Essentialist theories have been critiqued for treating identity markers such as race and gender as stable and homogenous constructs, presenting members of different groups as if they possessed "some innate and invariant set of characteristics that set them apart from each

other" (Grande, 2004, p. 92). Essentialism, and the notion of identifying individuals on the basis of transhistorical and immutable qualities (Fuss, 1989), is deeply engrained within power relationships and complex systems of cultural, social and material differences and processes of othering (Bauman & Vecchi, 2004). Discourses of authenticity, imported from the Enlightenment era, lie at the heart of colonial relationships and are founded on problematic essentialist theories of identity (Grande, 2004, p. 92). British-Indian novelist Salman Rushdie (1992) describes authenticity as the "respectable child of old-fashioned exoticism. It demands that sources, forms, style, language, and symbol all derive from supposedly homogenous and unbroken traditions" (p. 67). Referring to the experiences of Indigenous peoples in North America, novelist Thomas King (2003), who self-identifies as being of Cherokee, German, and Greek descent, explains that notions of authenticity have served to reduce and reify Indigenous peoples as the "literary Indian, the dying Indian, the imaginative construct" (p. 34), with the challenge for Indigenous peoples being to "break free from the parochial and paradoxical" notions (p. 44).

Critical theorists contend that the categories created by essentialism are flawed. They reject the notion that group membership can be reduced to a sole essential characteristic, and assert that to do so is inaccurate and discriminatory (Grande, 2004, p. 93). They point to the ways in which essentialism has been manipulated to create and maintain power hierarchies (Grande, 2004, p. 101), particularly in colonial and settler colonial contexts, and attempt to expose the problematic ways in which colonial subjects were presented as Other by dominant groups (Ashcroft et al., 1998; Said, 1979). Critical scholars claim that an essentialist view fails to adequately capture the complexity and multiplicity of identity and identity formation.

Stemming from these critiques, critical theorists advocate for theories of identity that acknowledge difference and attempt to delink the connection between identity and authenticity, and instead focus on the interplay between identity and power (Grande, 2004; Lawrence, 2010). They emphasize identity as fluid, relational, historically-bound, and contextual, co-existing in fragmented and hybrid forms, and shaped along multiple axes of difference (Bhabha, 2004; Chakrabarty, 2008; Crenshaw, 2010; Kriesberg, 2003; Parekh, 2008; van Meijl, 2010; Zapata, 2010). Identities do not stem from biological sources alone, but rather emanate from "different elements which can be reconstructed in new cultural conditions" (Weeks, 1994, p. 3), a product of the intersection between different components, social location, particular histories, stories and myths, and political and cultural discourses (Chakrabarty, 2008; Doerfler, 2015; Woodward, 1997). This non-essentialist approach argues for the deconstruction of identity, embracing the "spaces-in-between" (Grande, 2004, p. 93) and emphasizing the hybridity and mixing of identities (Bhabha 2004).

As an important tenet of critical theory's approach to identity is the contention that identity is not singular, but rather a plural category emphasizing the notion of multiple identities (Brah, 2007, p. 144). However, this emphasis on the multiplicity of identities can at times serve to reify identity (i.e., using language such as "we have multiple identities") as if identity is an object you can have or possess (Brah, 2007, p. 144). To treat identity in this way fails to capture identity as a process – constituted and changing with different contexts, social relations, and interactions (Cook-Huffman, 2009, p. 20). Moreover, it implies that the various identities that individuals hold can passively coexist and be easily compartmentalized, when instead, multiple identities can overlap, interact, and shape each other (Parekh, 2008, p. 132).

Postcolonial studies, the critical study of the various facets and legacies of colonialism and imperialism, has had an emancipatory effect by pointing to the hidden power relations implicit in the politics of identity. Moreover, it has permitted a more nuanced understanding of the multiplicity of identities, and can be credited with emphasizing the intertwined and contiguous nature of past, present, and future experiences on identity formation. However, Indigenous scholars have pointed to the ways in which postcolonialism tends to treat colonialism as a matter of the past, failing to acknowledge the ongoing impacts of settler colonialism. Postcolonialism has also been charged with failing to acknowledge the ways in which categories of identity and race constructed by and in settler colonial processes continue to structure present-day relations (Balint et al., 2014, p. 202; Johnson, 2011, p. 187). Lawrence (2010) warns that postcolonialism runs the risk of not only marginalizing, but erasing, Indigenous conceptions of identity at the individual and collective level. Similarly, Coulthard (2014) cautions against uncritically adopting an anti-essentialist, postcolonial approach when referring to Indigenous peoples, arguing that such a view can fail to adequately address the complexity of the settler colonial social relations that served to exacerbate exclusionary practices. Moreover, the emphasis on the deconstruction of identities that is so characteristic of postcolonialism risks flattening Indigenous worldviews, epistemologies, and constructions of nationhood (Lawrence, 2010, p. 509). To treat Indigeneity as a category to be deconstructed fails to acknowledge the ways in which Indigenous peoples, their identities, and their very existence have been continually questioned, with attempts at not only deconstruction, but also destruction. As Creek-Cherokee scholar Craig Womack (1999) cautions, “it is way too premature for Native scholars to deconstruct history when we haven’t yet constructed it” (p. 3). The

question of Indigenous nationhood is also a crucial point; postcolonialism posits that nationhood is imagined (Anderson, 2006) and that any sense of nationalism flowing from it is inevitably dangerous, serving as a potential cause of conflict (Lawrence, 2010, p. 511). The implications of such an approach are particularly damaging for Indigenous peoples. To claim that nationhood is imagined serves to marginalize the very violations that Indigenous peoples in settler states are mobilizing to redress and serves to jeopardize Indigenous struggles for self-determination (Lawrence, 2010, p. 512). Moreover, the claim that nationalism serves as an inevitable source of destructive conflict delegitimizes pan-Indigenous activism and social movements around issues of nationhood and sovereignty. As such, Indigenous theorists have asserted that postcolonialism lacks the theoretical tools with which to address identity in the settler colonial setting (Spady, 2017).

As an alternative, a left-essentialist approach (Grande, 2004, p. 100) or the use of "strategic essentialism" (Spivak & Harasym, 1990) to be employed by subaltern peoples as a tool of empowerment has been proposed. Left-essentialism is a permutation of essentialism that rejects the biological determinism of essentialism, in favour of socio-cultural elements (Grande, 2004). While the application of essentialism proper centres on "the whitestream desire to define otherness" (Grande, 2004, p. 101), left-essentialism recognizes that in particular contexts, social location and more specifically, otherness, can bring a sense of discursive power. Thus, there are contexts when it can be advantageous for members of a social group to present their identity in a particular (and often simplified manner) in order to achieve particular goals (Ashcroft et al., 1998, p. 79). Indian feminist scholar Gayatri C. Spivak (1984) for instance, acknowledges the usefulness of essentialist formations in struggles for

liberation from colonial oppression (p. 184), suggesting that employing essentialism can help those who have been oppressed achieve a renewed sense of dignity (Ashcroft et al., 1998, p. 75). A key aspect in this regard is that such an approach is about the use of essentialism as a strategy, and caution must be exercised to ensure that practitioners do not misuse the concept, or that the concept is not usurped to maintain current power imbalances. Nigerian playwright Wole Soyinka (1990) argues against utilizing strategies that were born out of the same framework as colonialism. As Black American activist and author Audre Lorde (1984) asserts, "The master's tools will never dismantle the master's house" (p. 106). Similarly, Alfred (1995) and Lawrence (2004) warn that the academic discourse around essentialism, as well as the debate between primordialism and constructivist approaches, are themselves part of an essentialist and colonialist fallacy. Alfred (1995) underscores that peoples, groups, and cultures both change and stay the same, and to focus on this essentialist debate misses the larger question of who sets the terms with which to evaluate identity. This points to the importance of an understanding of identity that focuses primarily on how history is interpreted and negotiated and who has the authority to determine an individual or group's identity (Alfred, 1995; Clifford, 1988; Lawrence, 2004). Some BIPOC scholars choose to refuse identity as a concept, preferring instead a more nuanced approach that would highlight a specificity of relations (Spady, 2017; TallBear, 2019). However, perhaps a hybrid approach that bridges the work of Indigenous scholars with a postcolonial approach, could provide a starting point to begin to unravel the complexity of social conflict and intergroup relations in the Canadian settler colonial context. Such an approach highlights the fluid nature of Identity, the way it changes and stays the same in relation to others, while also recognizing the ways in which

identity for Indigenous peoples is constructed, shaped and lived in the "politicized context of contemporary colonialism" (Alfred & Corntassel, 2005, p. 597). This same approach could provide useful insight into understanding the construction and sustenance of settler identity, and thus provide understandings into how best to challenge these aspects of dominance.

Such a hybrid approach is evident in the work of anthropologist Alexander Hinton (2005) who, in exploring the genocidal regime in Cambodia, describes how states work to construct essentialized categories of identity and belonging, a process he refers to as "manufacturing difference" (pp. 211-251) As a basic premise, Hinton (2005), in similar vein to Tajfel (1972), asserts that social identity is premised on the existence of an Other (out-group) through which we (in-group) can be distinguished. The state (or other hegemonic power) then works to crystalize the identity of the Other, making rigid what would regularly be more fluid categories of identity. Over time, this results in the stigmatization of those groups. After this difference is manufactured, the state works to organize the difference, initiating a series of institutional, legal, social and political changes that combine to transform the conditions under which the victimized group lives, reproducing the essentialized identities, and inscribing differences on the bodies of the Other (Hinton, 2005). The crystallization and organization of difference often serves to exacerbate pre-existing divisions based on ethnicity, race, religion, nationality, political affiliation, and class (Hinton, 2005, p. 283). The crystallization of differences has profound impacts on the Other. Complex identities are reduced to a set of rigid, abstract categories (Hinton, 2005, p. 283) which over time produces uncertainty among the victimized group in terms of individual and social identity, undermining the ways in which groups interpret experiences and act in the world. Simultaneously, the victimization of the group can lead to

feelings of superiority and privilege among those in power that continue to propagate the differences manufactured by the state. The identities of the subaltern group come to be shaped by the definition of otherness that is projected onto them (Davis, 2000, pp. 4-5) accentuating feelings of disconnection. This certainly resonates in the Canadian case, with Alfred (2009a) asserting that disconnection is the central impact of colonialism for Indigenous peoples, and the root cause for the various challenges facing Indigenous communities. Writing on the colonial situation in his native Algeria, Fanon warns that subaltern groups develop "psycho-affective attachments" to these forms of recognition by both society and the state, which contributes to the maintenance of the colonial relationship (cited in Coulthard, 2014, p. 26). In time, subaltern groups under come to internalize the images of themselves imposed on them by the hegemonic state, its institutions, and ruling class (Gramsci, 1971). The unequal structural relations that result come to be seen as both enduring and natural (Fanon, 2008, p. 19). Hinton (2005) warns that individuals may respond to this existential dilemma by engaging in behaviours that seek to inflate their fragmented sense of self. Envisioning, manufacturing and organizing differences of identity through multiple and simultaneous processes, enacted over time, has played a key role in setting the foundations for genocidal actions (Hinton, 2005).

Identity studies and the Canadian context. The mere presence of Indigenous peoples on newly-colonized land blocked settlement, and profound violence (physical, structural, cultural, ontological, epistemological, and symbolic) against Indigenous peoples, including genocidal processes, occurred so that settlers could gain control of the land. Through settler colonialism, a complex framework of formal identity legislation was imposed on Indigenous peoples by the state to simultaneously homogenize (through creation of the category of the

'Indian' as a governable entity) and fragment Indigenous identity, and shape and distort Indigenous relationships with the land.

The *Indian Act* manufactures, crystallizes, and organizes difference between Indigenous peoples and settlers, and within Indigenous communities themselves, the impacts of which cannot be underestimated. The *Indian Act* is a means of state-control, working to undermine traditional Indigenous governance mechanisms, weaken Indigenous control over lands, and criminalize any form of resistance to the *Indian Act.* From the beginning, the *Indian Act*, by defining Indianness, controlled who was recognized as an Indian band, entitled to land under treaties, and who was eligible to live on that land (Lawrence, 2004, p. 31), reinforcing state control over not only Indigenous communities and lands but what it means to be Indigenous. The violence of the acts of categorization, and the invasiveness and paternalistic nature of the *Indian Act* and those who enforced it, had a profound impact at the micro level on the lives of Indigenous peoples but also on the collective survival of Indigenous people as peoples. It simultaneously segregated while also attempting to (forcibly) assimilate Indigenous communities. Like other modes of settler colonial operation and control, the *Indian Act* has such a profound impact on all aspects of contemporary Indigenous life that it almost appears as natural (Lawrence, 2003, p. 3). The *Indian Act* has seeped into the ontologies and epistemologies of settler and Indigenous societies, shaping worldviews, and permeating our ways of thinking and the language we use to describe the other, and the result is that these worldviews then embed themselves in attempts to resist and change the *Indian Act*. And yet, in the face of this state-control, some Indigenous communities challenged and have continued to challenge this legislation. In this way, some Indigenous communities have implemented

membership policies to enable non-status relatives to participate in communities, even in cases where the state does not provide funding for them. In this way, Indigenous communities are asserting their own understandings of identity.

Indigenous peoples negotiate individual identity in relation to collective identity, both that which is constructed and that which is ascribed. It is formed in and with relationships with other individuals and communities, with the land, and with the cosmos (Lawrence, 2004; Wilson, 2008). Land is so essential to Indigenous worldviews and identity-formation processes, that the removal of people from the land represents a threat to the ability of those groups to survive (Tuck & Yang, 2012). This connection to land is so profound, that as Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg scholar and artist Leanne Simpson (2014) asserts, any attempts at resurgence in Indigenous political cultures will only be possible when Indigenous peoples can reclaim their lands and grow up intimately connected to it. Indigenous identity is also formed in the face of an external colonizing society that continues to treat Indigenous identity as problematic (Alfred, 2009a, p. 27; Lawrence, 2003, p. 4). Settler scholar Paige Arthur (2012), exploring the prospects for transitional justice to address harms committed against Indigenous peoples, asserts that the occupation of ancestral territory, forcible assimilation of children into other cultures, and forbidding the use of traditional language, worldviews, ceremonies and technologies can harm Indigenous identities as effectively as physical persecution.

Jill Doerfler (2015), who is a member of the White Earth Nation of Minnesota, explores the ways in which blood quantum impacted in her community. She explains that for many years, Anishinaabe leaders and community members of White Earth Nation resisted blood quantum as a requirement for tribal citizenship, despite the fact that it was employed and

manipulated by the state. Defining identity based on blood quantum ran counter to Anishinaabe values, worldviews, as well as traditional conceptions of identity, which were viewed as multifaceted. While such an approach made little sense to the community, over time the community relinquished to federal pressure (Doerfler, 2015, Loc. 272).[6] Blood quantum is a manifestation of settler colonialism that works to "deracinate – to pull out by the roots – and displace Indigenous peoples" (Kauanui, 2008, p. 9). It places pseudoscientific measures of ancestry above Indigenous conceptions of identity and descent which centre on familial and community obligations and relationships as well as relationships with the land, and the result of the practice has often pitted Indigenous peoples and communities against each other, fostering intragroup conflict (Doerfler, 2015, Loc. 242). As a result, communities struggle to deal with exclusionary artificial divisions within their communities and to define identity in their own terms in the face of an overwhelming form of state control that defined identity in a rigid and narrow manner, all with the aim of assimilating Indigenous peoples into the colonial nation-state, removing rights and dispossessing Indigenous peoples from their land.

As noted above, through identity legislation, the settler state organized difference not only between Indigenous peoples and settlers, but also within Indigenous communities themselves. In Canada, the distinction between Indians and those considered as 'half-breeds' and thus non-Indian, created one of the most central divisions among Indigenous peoples today (Lawrence, 2004). Lawrence (2004, 2010) explains that the formal classification of the category of Métis, which was later reclassified as Aboriginal in 1982, created a state of liminal existence

[6] The Anishinaabeg of White Earth have since worked to reform the blood quantum requirements of tribal citizenship, and adopted a new constitution (2013) that requires lineal descent, not blood quantum, as an identity marker.

for Indigenous peoples who were not legally considered to be 'Indian' (and thus excluded from treaty-making processes) and yet socially not considered to be white, excluded from the material privileges that came with that social location. Thus, Métis peoples faced multi-pronged exclusionary processes, in a "bifurcated world of 'settler' and 'Indian' with no place to call their own" (Lawrence, 2010, p. 517). While many Métis peoples attempted to resist these processes, they were brutally repressed. As a result, those who could pass as white did so, denying their identity (particularly in the public realm). Laws and policies stripped Métis peoples of their rights, and forced many to live "literally on the margins of society" (Logan, Blomme, Langille, & Bellrose, 2020).

Understanding the relentless nature of the multifaceted ways in which the settler state and settler society has manufactured, crystallized, and organized identity within and among Indigenous communities raises further questions about the utility of postcolonialism to effectively address issues of Indigenous identity. Hybridity is a key concept in postcolonialism (whether in the sense of hybrid identities or cultural hybridity), pointing to the ways in which individuals and groups hold border identities, embracing liminality (Lawrence, 2010, p. 511). However, within the context of a settler colonial discourse that controls Indigenous identity, Indigeneity ceases to exist with mixing. In the Canadian Courts, cultural hybridity can impact the ability of Indigenous peoples to assert title, so much so that hybridity nullifies Indigenous identity (Lawrence, 2010, p. 511).[7] The notion of cultural hybridity is problematic in a situation

[7] Bonita Lawrence (2010) cites the examples of the Canadian Supreme Court decision of *Van der Peet* and *Delgamuukw* (pp. 522-523). Dorothy Van der Peet, a member of the Sto:lo Nation was charged with violating the *Fisheries Act,* charged with illegally selling salmon caught under a fishing licence intended only for food and ceremonial purposes. Van der Peet asserted that the restrictions violated her Aboriginal rights as defined by Section 35(1) enshrined her right to sell fish. The Supreme Court decision ("R. v. Van der Peet," 1996) defined and restricted the scope of Indigenous rights, and how they would be interpreted in the courts through the Integral to

whereby Indigenous peoples attempt to assert themselves and their culture in the face of foundational racist myths and national narratives that bind their indigeneity to primordiality. Indigenous peoples are thus caught in an "identity paradox" (Grande, 2004, pp. 95-99). This paradox sees Indigenous communities try to navigate internal pressures as they try to embrace more fluid constructions of identity. At the same time, communities often have to maintain a more restrictive definition of Indianness that will allow them to assert their rights in the fact of external pressures. In this way, Indigenous communities retain essentialist constructions of their identity in order to gain legitimacy and recognition and to be recognized as authentic. And yet, this essentialist approach fails to theorize the relational nature of Indigenous identity, and the conflict pressures facing Indigenous communities in terms of identity formation. Moreover, such an approach is often dismissed as essentialist, and at times racist in a postmodern world and provides little insight into possible ways to disrupt the hegemonic pressures that create this paradox in the first place (Grande, 2008, pp. 99-104).

Social identity is rooted in culture, myths, rituals, language, and shared meanings of life (Jeong, 2000, p. 72; Pelletier, 2013). In amendments to the *Indian Act*, a variety of Aboriginal cultural and spiritual practices and ceremonies were also outlawed, serving as further evidence of an assault on Indigenous identity. In Indigenous communities, ceremonies such as the Potlatch (in the west-coast) or the Prairie Thirst Dance, are central to social identity, spirituality and group cohesion (Pettipas, 1994). The Potlatch was a means as re-distributing wealth as part

a Distinctive Culture Test, or the Van der Peet Test. The ruling has been criticized for both narrowing the scope of Indigenous rights, while also providing the Crown with an opportunity to extinguish Indigenous rights. A year later, in *Delgamuukw v British Columbia,* the Supreme Court of Canada provided the first comprehensive account of Aboriginal title to the land ("Delgamuukw v The Queen, Delgamuukw-Gisday'wa," 1997). *Delgamuukw* also clarifies the government's duty to consult with Indigenous peoples, and affirmed the legal validity of oral history.

of a spiritual and ceremonial practice, and thus potentially served as a challenge to capitalist values. By prohibiting participation in such ceremonies, the settler state aimed to break the resistance, cohesion, and social identity of the group so as to assimilate and Christianize Indigenous groups in the settler colonial context. Despite the criminalization of such ceremonies however, the settler state did not succeed in eradicating Indigenous spirituality and ceremonial practice and instead Indigenous peoples adapted their beliefs and often practiced 'underground' (Pettipas, 1994).

Stories, myths, and narratives employed by both the state and society have combined to manufacture and crystallize differences between Indigenous peoples and settlers (Donald, 2012). These pervasive nation-building myths and the corresponding national identity do not resemble the lived experiences of Indigenous peoples (Logan, 2014, p. 113), with profound consequences in maintaining settler colonial relations and influencing or more specifically limiting possibilities for reconciliation. These myths, stories, anecdotes, and narratives are embedded in, and communicated through the social imaginary (Hursh, 2011). A social imaginary refers to "the ways people imagine their social existence, how they fit together with others, how things go on between them and their fellows, the expectations that are normally met, and the deeper normative notions and images that underlie these expectations" (Taylor, 2004, p. 23). The social imaginary provides a sense of legitimacy about the various practices and social relations that encompass a society.

Settler scholar Avril Bell (2014) draws on the concept of the social imaginary to present an articulation of a settler imaginary that accounts for structural location. The settler imaginary, like all social imaginaries, becomes an implicit background – providing settlers with a

framework with which to understand and undertake the collective practices that make up all social life, including those ideas and values that underpin ideas about issues such as nationhood and Indigenous-settler relations (Bell, 2014). The settler imaginary permeates all layers of the settler colonial mesh influencing actors and institutions at the macro, meso, and micro levels, serving to legitimize the state while also working to invisibilize settler colonial structures of oppression. Settler scholar Mark Rifkin (2014) describes the persistent and powerful nature of the settler imaginary and how it is engrained in the "subjectivities, intimacies, articulations and sensations" of settlers (p. 7). This settler imaginary is not fixed – it is fluid, and changes over time and place, melding and merging based on new practices and processes, yet the inequities that accompany it remain fixed. Moreover, despite its changing nature, the imaginary itself remains persistent and powerful, engrained in the "subjectivities, intimacies, articulations and sensations" of settlers (Rifkin, 2014, p. 7). Rifkin (2013) uses the term *settler common sense* to refer to "the ways the legal and political structures that enable non-Native access to Indigenous territories come to be lived as given, as simply the unmarked, generic conditions of possibility for occupancy, association, history and personhood" (pp. 322-323). This settler common sense is embedded, renewed and recreated in the everyday, ordinary experiences of non-Indigenous, non-state actors in ways that serve to implicitly reproduce the lived hegemony of settler colonial occupation (Rifkin, 2014, p. 10).

Feminist scholar Sherene Razack (2002) suggests that "quintessential feature of white settler mythologies is…the disavowal of conquest, genocide, slavery and the exploitation of the labour of peoples of colour" (p. 2). The disavowal of conquest is key to what Regan (2010) describes as Canada's benevolent peacemaker narrative, which she asserts is the bedrock of

settler identity (p. 11). This myth centers on the idea that the settling of Canada was a relatively peaceful process (Alfred, 2005, p. 151; Battell Lowman & Barker, 2015; Regan, 2010, pp. 87-88). It is a celebratory narrative that attempts to distinguish the settling of Canada from the violent dispossession that occurred in the US, and highlights Canada's peaceful negotiation and signing of treaties with Indigenous peoples (Epp, 2003; Regan, 2010, pp. 83-88). However, in presenting the settlement of Indigenous lands as peaceful and unopposed, contemporary Indigenous claims to land and struggles for justice become viewed as 'greedy and unreasonable' (Lovell, 2007, p. 5). A similarly problematic nation-building narrative is that of Canada's "two founding nations" which presents a revisionist version of Canadian history that serves to erase Indigenous lives, histories, identities, epistemologies, and ontologies (Rice & Snyder, 2012).

In the Prairie provinces, Canadian settler imaginary is intertwined with a narrative of the European settler as a nation-builder (Bertram 2011, 161). Such a narrative often depicts the prairies as vacant – *terra nullius* – meaning 'nobody's land' (Epp 2003, 234), with noble pioneers enduring hardships, suffering and trauma to build the nation (Bertram 2011, 168). The "unique spirit" (Lovell 2007, 5) as well as endurance, hardship, and work ethic (Rotz, 2017, p. 162) of settlers is emphasized in order to distinguish them from Indigenous communities. In reflecting on settlers' narratives in this project, it is not only what was said, but rather what was omitted in their settlement stories – namely, Indigenous presence on the land. This vision of the settler and *terra nullius* is in line with Fanon's "unchanging dream" whereby the "the settler makes history, he [*sic*] is the absolute beginning" (cited in Bertram 2011, 173).

This settler-centric view creates a disjuncture between the dispossession of Indigenous peoples from the land and the arrival of settlers, disconnecting simultaneous historical

processes (Bertram 2011, 161). Settler scholar Laurie Bertram (2011), writing on collective memory in Manitoba, asserts that by fixating on historically-select narratives of settler hardship and trauma, we fail to engage with both the subtle and explicit power relationships and attempts for control that are endemic to settle colonialism and erode the acknowledgement of Canada's colonial past and present. When Indigenous peoples are included in these narratives it is through a Eurocentric lens (Bertram 2011, 169). Moreover, these romanticized tales of settler heroism, in this case of upward social mobility in the face of hardship, are attempts to render white settlers as innocent (Mackey, 2011; Tuck & Yang, 2012) removed from the violence wrought by colonialism (Schick, 2014).

The maintenance of a settler imaginary however changing, exists alongside a context in which Indigenous peoples have been subject to an attack on their identity, so that as Lawrence (2004) asserts "identity, for Native people, can never be a neutral issue" (p. 1). Indigenous participants in this project referred to an imposed identity, including an assault on what it means to be Indigenous living on this land in a (white) settler society. Identity for Indigenous peoples is highly charged, owing to sustained attempts by the settler state to undermine and eradicate Indigenous peoples' social and cultural distinctiveness for the purpose of stabilizing settlement and asserting settler colonial authority.

Myths of peaceful settlement and of the hardships of settler ancestors were accompanied by simultaneous stories of the Indigenous Other, treated in a homogenous manner, presented as fragile and vulnerable (Veracini, 2011, p. 6), as culturally and morally inferior (Regan, 2010, p. 68), and uncivilized and incompetent (Coulthard, 2014). Lawrence (2004) notes that settler society has presented views of Indigenous identity as couched in terms

of primordiality, in a "state of existence in contradistinction to modernity" (p. 1). A common pattern in settler states is referring to Indigenous peoples as a "dying race" (Absolon & Willett, 2005, p. 108; King, 2003, p. 34), the "Indian problem" (Egan, 2011, p. 123; Monture-Angus, 2001), or the "noble savage" (Ellingson, 2001). This primordial construction is highlighted in the following: "the Indian is a simulation, an invention…The Indian is stuck in the 1800s. He (yes, not she) wears a Plains-style headdress, has long black hair in two braids, copper-coloured skin, and always has a stern and stoic pose" (Vizenor & Lee, 1999, p. 21). In a context whereby legal identities are legislated by the settler state and where negatives stereotypes of Indigenous peoples are presented as truths, Indigenous peoples often feel a pressure to "perform" their identity or engage in strategic storytelling around a false story of self (Pelletier, 2013, pp. 151-155). Alfred (2009a) asserts that most settlers view Indigenous peoples in problematic terms viewed as "obstacles to the progress of civilization, wards of the Crown, relics of savagery, the dregs of modern society, criminals and terrorists" (p. 27). These racist perceptions have as a common assumption a view of Indigenous peoples as holding a "static identity that holds tight to the past, prohibiting change and adaptation" (Doerfler, 2015, p. Loc. 414), unable to adapt to modernity or integrate into the Canadian social fabric. These myths also present Indigenous forms of governance as prone to corruption (Lovell, 2007) and unable to function in line with western neoliberal values and the institutions commonly held as the bastion of democracy and pinnacle of development (Alfred, 2009a, p. 184; Balint et al., 2014; Epp, 2003, p. 228).

While these damaging and racist narratives of Indigenous peoples are rooted in historical processes and events, they continue to have an impact today, so engrained in the settler imaginary, the everyday operation of settler colonialism, and in the perpetration of

cultural and symbolic violence against Indigenous communities through society's norms, structures and institutions (Regan, 2010, p. 14). The stories we (re)tell and the images we (re)produce about who we are, and who the other is, serve to reinforce the hegemony of the settler state while also naturalizing the hegemony of (primarily) anglo-white identity as the core Canadian national identity. This mythologizing is further compounded by the stereotypes and exclusionary practices against Indigenous peoples (considered as an "outgroup" according to Tajfel's (1972) social identity theory) that lead to perpetuation of colonial and paternalistic relations between the state, settlers and Indigenous peoples. This singular focus on the Other as the Indian Problem has blinded settlers from seeing that ways in which settler identity and imaginary (i.e., the Settler Problem) shapes the unequal relationships between Indigenous peoples and the Canadian state and society (Epp, 2003; Regan, 2010). Indeed, a 2019 survey of 5,732 Canadians across the country found that while many settlers may recognize the disadvantages facing many Indigenous communities across the country, a large number of settlers – 30% of respondents (an increase of 5% since the 2016 report (p. 22)) blame Indigenous peoples themselves (Environics Institute for Survey Research, 2020, p. 11), highlighting how settlers continue to perpetuate a myth of the 'Indian problem'. As conflict resolution scholar Michelle LeBaron (2003) notes "revising myths and unpacking assumptions embedded within them is a powerful way to reimagine history and envision a new future" (pp. 280-281). The challenge becomes how to revise those myths that serve as a foundation to settler identity, to unsettle the settler, in ways that can transform settler identity and potentially transform Indigenous-settler relations.

The Education Node of the Settler Colonial Mesh

Schools and educational institutions operate at the meso level of the settler colonial mesh, serving as institutions of knowledge production and dissemination, as well as sites of power. Built into any public education system are fundamental assumptions surrounding social structure and capacity. The late educator and activist Kenneth Robinson (2010) describes public education systems as Eurocentric, driven by economic imperatives and an approach to knowledge production that is rooted in the Industrial Revolution and Enlightenment period (as outlined in Chapter 3).

Schools function in the context of specific ideologies and social relations, and as such, in the settler colonial setting, provide a structure for the specific ways of understanding and engaging in settler and Indigenous relationships (Stastny, 2019). Schools reflect the dominant ideologies of the broader society (including around race and gender, as examples) while at the same time are ideological-making institutions (Jansen, 2009). For Indigenous peoples in Canada (and elsewhere), education "has not been benign or beneficial" (Battiste, 1998). Schools operate not as neutral institutions, but rather in the settler colonial context as a crucial tool for the assimilation and oppression of Indigenous peoples, as well as the privileging of settler groups (Baldwin et al., 2011; Battiste, 2013, 2018; Battiste & Youngblood Henderson, 2018; Gaudry & Lorenz, 2018, 2019; Korteweg & Fiddler, 2018; Lorenz, 2017; Marom, 2019; Marom & Rattray, 2019; Native Women's Association of Canada, 2013; Schick, 2014; St. Germain & Dyck, 2011). Through the education system, differential access to quality education has served as a means to reinforce power asymmetries and the social structure of the society (Dei, Mazzuca, McIsaac, & Zine, 1997; Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015c).

Curricula – as an institution – not only refers to the text and lesson plans of a course syllabus, but rather represents and encompasses an understanding of the "knowledge encoded in the dominant beliefs, values, and behaviours, deeply embedded in all aspects of institutional life" (Jansen, 2009, p. 172). Schools have served as a colonial and racist tool – through what is taught, and omitted, in its curricula (Godlewska et al., 2010) and through how that curricula is taught (Battiste, 2013). The curricula as it is approached in the Canadian settler colonial context is built upon cognitive imperialism – "a form of cognitive manipulation used to discredit other [Indigenous] knowledge bases and values and seeks to validate one source of knowledge and empower it through public education" (Battiste, 1998; Battiste & Youngblood Henderson, 2018). Cognitive imperialism works to deny groups access to their language and cultural integrity, while working to maintain the legitimacy of the dominant group, its worldviews, knowledge systems, language, and beliefs (Battiste, 1998). The design, conception, and structure of the contemporary Canadian education system is built upon cognitive imperialism and was/is intricately linked to settler colonialism.

The Indian Residential School System. The Indian Residential School System (IRSS) is perhaps the most-widely acknowledged harm against Indigenous peoples in the Canadian context. While the first schools appeared in the mid-1800s, it was not until the late 1800s that the system of residential schools was institutionalized, following the report of journalist and lawyer Nicholas Flood Davin (1879) who was commissioned by the government of John A. Macdonald to investigate industrial schools for Indigenous communities in the United States. Davin (1879) highlighted the positive role of such schools as a vehicle for assimilation of Indigenous children and recommended their institutionalization in the Canadian context. The

IRSS grew out of the precursor legislation to the *Indian Act*, and operated in partnership with the Government of Canada, and churches and religious organizations of various denominations (Barker, Rollo, & Battell Lowman, 2017; Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2012). Residential schools operated for more than 100 years, with the last school closing in 1996.

The IRSS was a system of day,[8] boarding, mission, and industrial (which later developed into what we now know as residential) schools designed to forcibly assimilate First Nations, Métis, (Chartrand, Logan, & Daniels, 2006; Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2016) and Inuit (Igloliorte, 2011; Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015b) children in Canada through a church-state partnership. By 1894, regulations were put in place by the federal government relating to residential school attendance. Under these regulations, attendance remained voluntary, however a caveat was made that stated that where an Indian agent (or other agent, such as a Justice of the Peace) believed Indigenous children (between six and sixteen years of age) were not being properly cared for, then the child could be placed in an industrial or boarding school (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015c, pp. 60-62). By 1920 and resulting from an amendment to the *Indian Act*, "every Indian child between the ages of seven to fifteen" was forced to attend (Episkenew, 2009, p. 46). In practice, Indigenous children as young as four years old were forcibly removed from their parents and communities (A. J. Barker et al., 2017). By the height of the IRSS system (1930-1940s), it is

[8] It is estimated that approximately 200,000 Indigenous children attended federally operated Indian day schools (Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada, 2020). While these children left the school at the end of the day to return to their families and communities, they still endured significant trauma, a loss of culture, and were subject to physical, sexual, and emotional abuse (Raptis & Members of the Tsimshian Nation, 2016). Indian day school students were not included in the original IRSSA. It was not until 2019, resulting from the decades of activism of day school Survivors, perhaps most notably Elder Garry McLean, and resulting from a class-action lawsuit, that the Federal Indian Day Schools settlement was reached.

estimated that 20% of the total Indigenous population across Canada, anywhere between 100,000 – 150,000 Indigenous children were institutionalized in the approximately 130 schools (Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada, 2018) that were violent and colonial in nature.

The underlying premise of the IRSS as a node on the settler colonial mesh was to "modernize the primitive and civilize the savage" (Nagy, 2020, p. 222) . The goal of the IRSS was not just to educate Indigenous children to be colonial subjects, but also to Christianize, civilize, and assimilate First Nations, Métis and Inuit children through the loss of Indian status through the "progressive decay and final disappearance of the reserve communities" (Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1996, vol. 1, ch. 10, sec. 1.1). Schools were set up to sever parental involvement in the intellectual, cultural, and spiritual development of Aboriginal children (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2012). By attacking Indigenous capacities for cultural reproduction, the schools aimed to "ensure that distinct self-governing Aboriginal communities would no longer exist" (James, 2012, p. 185).

As Survivors have shared, schools were notorious for high rates of physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse, and high student death rates (Chrisjohn, 2006; Fontaine, 2010; Furniss, 1995; Igloliorte, 2011; Kaefer & Gamblin, 2014; Sellars, 2013; Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2012, 2015d). Schools were also chronically underfunded, with inadequate shelter and access to basic health provisions, nutrition, and as such, many Indigenous children succumbed to preventable diseases. Moreover, the quality of education was "inferior by any standard" (Nicholas, 2011)

The violence inflicted on Indigenous children, and by extension their families and communities, was not limited to direct physical and sexual abuse. The schools aimed to break the link between their culture and identity (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015c). Indigenous children were forbidden to engage in spiritual practices and maintain cultural traditions. The operation of the schools violently ruptured the sense of identity of Indigenous peoples at both the individual and community level, fracturing community and familial bonds. Métis scholar Tricia E. Logan (2016) describes how the IRSS "shattered both the transfer and retention of existing histories" which were replaced with histories of Europe and of Christianity (p. 59). They repressed cultural worldview and norms, both through their systemic operation and through the curriculum, and forbade the use of Indigenous languages setting the foundation for linguicide – of the "killing of languages without killing the speaker" (Nicholas, 2011). The IRSS attempted to destroy knowledge of their culture, language and worldview, resulting in the disruption of processes of transmission of cultural values and identity from one generation to the next (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015c). The establishment and operation of the IRSS (as one node of the settler colonial mesh) was characterized by the TRC (2015c) as "cultural genocide… the destruction of those structures and policies that allow the group to continue as a group" (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015c).[9]

Honourable Murray Sinclair (2015) sums up the experiences of Survivors, explaining "they were stripped of their self-respect and they were stripped of their identity" (*cited in*

[9] Settler sociologist and genocide scholar Andrew Woolford (2009) outlines the concerns that come with use of the terms "ethnocide" and/or cultural genocide" when they are intended as qualifiers to denote a destructive process by the state that is considered as different from, or less severe than, genocide proper.

MacLeans, 2015). Survivors of the schools struggled to re-adapt to the traditional life that "they had been conditioned to reject" (Nagy, 2012a, p. 56). Simultaneously, they did not meet colonial standards of whiteness and thus were rejected by mainstream settler society, subject to inequities, oppression, racism and stigma. The trauma of this experience has led to a struggle often characterized by lateral and internalized violence, including struggles with alcohol and substance abuse, suicide, and feelings of anger, hopelessness, and shame (Nagy, 2012a; Rice & Snyder, 2012). The need for healing and for the space to reclaim and reassert Indigenous identity at the individual and collective levels has been a recurring theme from the statements gathered by the TRC and in the TRC's Summary of the Final Report (2015c). The devastation wrought by the IRSS have been profound and intergenerational (Bombay, Matheson, & Anisman, 2014; Sellars, 2013; Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015a, 2015c, 2015d, 2015e).

The operation and consequences of the IRSS were also far-reaching among the settler citizenry. The Honourable Murray Sinclair (2015) described "…at the same time that Aboriginal people were being demeaned in the schools and their culture and language were being taken away from them and they were being told that they were inferior, they were pagans, that they were heathens and savages and that they were unworthy of being respected – that very same message was being given to the non-aboriginal children in public schools as well" (cited in Kennedy, 2015).

The IRSS is but one node of destruction and cannot be understood in isolation from the larger settler colonial project of which it was part (Woolford, 2009). Rather, it must be considered as "profoundly emblematic of the flawed relationship" (Nagy, 2012a, p. 57)

between Indigenous and settler Canadians. Residential schools are broadly connected to treaty rights and land claims settlements (Woolford, 2011) and issues of governance, including the destruction of Indigenous political and economic institutions and forms of governance (Alfred, 2005; Powell & Peristerakis, 2014). Moreover, they are connected to other instances of oppression such as the child welfare system (Barker et al., 2019; Blackstock, 2011), the criminal justice system, and systemic violence against Indigenous women (National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, 2019a).

Contemporary public education system in a settler colonial context. UNICEF (2020) ranks Canada 30th among 41 rich countries[10] when it comes to respecting child well-being and respecting children's rights. While Canada's performance in public education (measured in terms of enrollment in school, academic achievement, years of education completed) results in a relatively higher scoring at 20 out of 41 countries (UNICEF Innocenti, 2020), the continued and exacerbating disparities and inequities between Indigenous children and settler children (Parkin, 2015; Statistics Canada, 2018) tarnishes this standing. Its reputation as a public education system that performs well and efficiently (Canadian School Boards Association, 2018) cannot withstand the challenges that result from the gross inequities that exist between Indigenous and settler children.

Public education in Canada falls under the responsibility of the individual province or territory, with each provincial or territorial department or ministry responsible for the overall organization, delivery, and assessment of education. Public schools are provincially accredited,

[10] The language of "rich countries" mirrors UNICEF's Innocenti Report Card Series on Child Well-Being in Rich Countries (2020).

publicly funded, and follow a standard curriculum. A large number of Indigenous students are educated for all or part of their education within these provincial/territorial schools. However, while outside the purview of this study, it is important to note that many First Nations students are also educated in on-reserve schools. These schools are funded by the federal government who share responsibility with First Nations. These band-operated schools have been chronically under-funded by the federal government (Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1996; Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015e) with estimates that First Nations schools receive between $2,000 - $3,000 less per student, per year of schooling (King, Edwards, & Blackstock, 2013). It is estimated that approximately 60 percent of students living on reserves attend these underfunded and overcrowded schools, while 40 percent of First Nations students have to leave their homes in order to attend publicly-funded schools in other areas (Assembly of First Nations, 2020).

The COVID-19 pandemic is poised to drastically increase these inequities; schools on First Nation reserves are already struggling with over-crowding making physical distancing in the classroom near impossible. Lack of internet and technology access, limited funding, and challenges with teacher recruitment (Coubrough, 2017) serve to exacerbate already existing inequities (Monkman, 2020). Within and among public schools, COVID-19 also threatens to widen education gaps, highlighting existing social inequalities and exacerbating educational disparities (Doyle, 2020; United Nations, 2020). A recent trend of setting up ‘learning (or pandemic) pods,’ also facetiously referred to as #PrivilegePods on various social media platforms, sees families with the financial means of forming smaller classrooms and hiring teachers to guide their children, while racialized and lower-income families have no

opportunities or means to do the same (Bascatamurty & Alphonso, 2020; Yang & Kennedy, 2020). Given the permanence of settler colonial structures and the changing climate in which we live as a result of the pandemic, it is crucial that the oppressive educational experiences of Indigenous students are not relegated to the past. The contemporary educational system operates within a settler colonial context that continues to harm Indigenous children in publicly-funded schools.

Educational research often uses terms such as 'achievement gap' or 'educational gap' to explain the disparities in educational attainment and outcomes, typically highlighting differences in terms of standardized test scores and high school graduation rates between various groups in a society. In the settler colonial case, Indigenous peoples in Canada experience a significant achievement gap from the settler population. Comparing statistics in terms of university education, in 2011 an estimated 9.8 percent of Indigenous people aged 25 to 64 had a university degree (with an additional 38.6 percent of the Indigenous population holds a trade certificate or college diploma), while 26.5 percent of non-Indigenous Canadians in that age group have a university degree (with an additional 38.2 percent of the non-Indigenous population holding a trade certificate or college diploma) (Statistics Canada, 2018). Perhaps more troubling however, among Indigenous peoples between the ages of 25-64, 28.9% reported having no post-graduate certification, while only 12.1% of non-Indigenous peoples responded this way (Statistics Canada, 2018). These statistics are even more staggering if you are to account for the large number of Indigenous children in the child welfare system. Scholars and activists argue that the child welfare system continues the legacy of the Residential Schools (McKenzie, Varcoe, Browne, & Day, 2016; Trocmé, Knoke, & Blackstock, 2004). Former Senator

Murray Sinclair recently stated “the monster that was created in the residential schools moved into a new house. And that monster now lives in the child welfare system” (cited in Krugel, 2018). Indigenous family exposure to the IRSS drives the overrepresentation of Indigenous youth in the child welfare system (Barker et al., 2019), alongside historic and contemporary oppression and inequities (Blackstock, 2011). A Manitoba-based study on the educational outcomes of children in care demonstrate that at every measure of success in school, children involved with the child welfare system did worse by those who had not been in care (Brownell et al., 2015). The report highlighted, for instance, that only 47 percent of children in care were ready to enter school, compared to 76 percent of children who did not have contact with the child welfare system (Brownell et al., 2015). Moreover, only 33 percent of children in care graduated from high school, compared to 89 percent of children who had not come in contact with the system (Brownell et al., 2015), demonstrating overwhelmingly that children in care have fewer successes in school than children who have not been in care. This is particularly disturbing given that of the approximately 10,258 children in care in Manitoba as of March 2019, 88 percent of those children are Indigenous (Manitoba Families, 2019).

While these statistics demonstrate the stark differences that exist between groups in society, they do not provide a comprehensive understanding of the source of such inequities. An emphasis on an achievement gap can imply a deficit on the part of the oppressed group, rather than highlighting the institutional deficits that exist to further privilege the dominant group (Ladson-Billings, 2006), in this case, mainstream settler society. As an alternative framing, the concept of ‘educational debt’ has been suggested to more accurately reflect the contemporary settler colonial context and the intersection of multiple determinants that have

accumulated over time. An understanding of the educational debt means accounting for "historical, economic, sociopolitical, and moral components" (Ladson-Billings, 2006, p. 3) that convalesce to structure systemic and institutional power (Orlowski & Cottrell, 2019). In this way, Canada owes Indigenous children an educational debt. There is a need to ensure equity of education for Indigenous children, while at the same time educating all children about Canada's nation-building processes, as well as the cultures, histories, and worldviews of Indigenous peoples.

Transitional Justice and the Canadian Setting

In response to the growing number of individual claims and class action lawsuits against the Churches and the government of Canada, the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement (IRSSA) (Government of Canada, 2006) was negotiated between First Nations and Inuit communities, religious institutions, the federal Government, and a national consortium of lawyers and law firms. Coming into effect in 2007, the terms of this negotiated agreement included funding for commemoration efforts, the Common Experience Payment, the Independent Assessment Process, as well as funding towards health, healing and support for Survivors and their families, including the now-defunct Aboriginal Healing Foundation (Jung, 2014, p. 226). The IRSSA also outlined the creation of a TRC, which was mandated to:

> promote public education and awareness about the Indian Residential School system and its legacy, as well as to provide former students, their families, and communities an opportunity to share their Indian Residential School experiences in a safe and culturally appropriate manner (Government of Canada, 2006).

The Canadian TRC is a transitional justice mechanism and is the first of its kind to be established as part of a judicially-mediated agreement (as opposed to through legislation or decree), and the courts played an ongoing role in the implementation and supervision of the commission. It is one of the first TRCs to focus exclusively on crimes committed against children and Indigenous groups (International Centre for Transitional Justice, 2008).

Led by commissioners then Justice, and former Senator Murray Sinclair, Dr. Marie Wilson, and Chief Wilton Littlechild, the TRC hosted a number of national events throughout the course of its mandate with the goal of hearing from and acknowledging the experiences of former students and their families, and engaging the public to provide education about the history and legacy of the IRSS. It is estimated that as many as 155,000 visitors attended these national events, with over 9,000 residential school Survivors registered in attendance (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015c, p. 25). The TRC received more than 6,750 statements from Survivors, their family members, and others (such as former staff members and their families) who had information or knowledge of the residential school system and its legacy (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015c, p. 25). These statements were gathered in both public events, private conversations, and various outreach activities. Wherever statements were gathered, health support workers were present to provide culturally appropriate support and counseling as needed. The Commission's effort to compile an accurate record of the residential schools was hampered by continuous litigation with the government and some churches over the release of documents relating to the abuse at the schools.

Theoretical underpinnings of transitional justice mechanisms. The ontological and epistemological suppositions that underpin imperialism continue to structure our world (Dhawan, 2011, p. 264), including through pursuits such as transitional justice. Transitional justice can be considered along a spectrum (Nagy, 2008, p. 277). At one end is a narrow view concerned primarily with redressing past wrongs and achieving justice in states shifting from periods of armed conflict and authoritarianism to a more liberal democratic future (Hinton, 2010, p. 2). Proponents of this more traditional view emphasize political and legal reform and strengthening the rule of law (Teitel, 2003). Such a view espouses the (supposed) neutrality of the transitional justice discourse and views law as depoliticized (Miller, 2008, p. 288). Often times, this narrow, legalistic view fails to see the ways in which the law itself can serve to obfuscate and legitimize state abuses of power (Leebaw, 2008, p. 96; Sharp, 2014, p. 156). At the other end of the spectrum is a broader and more encompassing approach to transitional justice that accounts for the set of practices, mechanisms, and concerns that arise following not only armed conflict, but also periods of widespread violations of human rights or repression, including in states considered as liberal democracies (Balint & Evans, 2010; Hinton, 2010, p. 2; Nagy, 2008, p. 277). This encompassing approach aims to restore justice within the parameters of peacebuilding, and includes diverse aims such as strengthening the rule of the law and rectifying human rights violations, as well as larger sets of outcomes such as reconciliation, reparations, development, and nation-building (Duthie, 2008; Laplante, 2008; Lundy & McGovern, 2008; Mani, 2008; Nagy, 2008; Riaño Alcalá & Baines, 2012; Sharp, 2014).

The field of transitional justice has been driven predominantly by its practice. That practice includes a wide set of mechanisms such as truth and reconciliation commissions

(TRCs), as well as prosecutions, memorials (including monuments, parks, street names, and museums), reparations, amnesties, pardons, lustration and vetting, and the clearing of criminal records of those who opposed the state during the particular time frame in question (Hinton, 2010, p. 4). The field is linked to a large number of institutional structures, such as international humanitarian law, human rights law, tribunals and courts, governmental and non-governmental organizations, as well as academic centres (Power, 2007).

A consensus of sorts has emerged within the international community that there can be no lasting peace without some kind of mechanism through which a society can account for and attempt to remedy past injustices and oppression (Miller, 2008, p. 271; Mutua, 2015; Nagy, 2008). Transitional justice has become a global project, and within the context of broader processes of globalization and nation-building, the question has become "not *whether* [emphasis in original] something should be done after atrocity but *how* [emphasis in original] it should be done" (Nagy, 2008, p. 276). As such, there has been a proliferation of transitional justice mechanisms, particularly TRCs, so much so that TRCs have come to be regarded as an "official symbol of beginning a political transition" to a system with greater respect for human rights (Chapman & van der Merwe, 2008, p. 280). However, research on the impact of TRCs as a catalyst for social change suggests a mixed record (Mutua, 2015, p. 9; Olsen, Payne, & Reiter, 2010) and while there have been instances of success, there are also a number of criticisms levied against transitional justice mechanisms and their implementation, many of which stem from the normative assumptions of the field.

Transitional justice theories and processes have not foregrounded the long-term structural inequities and societal arrangements that enable human rights violations and

structural violence, and have left unscathed the "institutional arrangements and structures [that] may be deeply implicated in the production of violation or the harm in the first place" (Kapur, 2006, p. 889). Reflecting a broader Eurocentric trend that conceptualizes the west as the agent of human rights that should respond to human rights abuses in non-western states (those considered as Other*)*, transitional justice has had a tendency to ignore the extent to which liberal democracies can be considered in need of "post-conflict" reconstruction and reconciliation (Balint et al., 2014, p. 195; Corntassel & Holder, 2008; Moses, 2011). The field has implicitly reinforced the idea that large-scale human rights violations in societies recovering from armed conflict are the exceptional cases where transitional justice is required (Nagy, 2008) and in so doing, shifts focus from the need to address sustained violations in so-called liberal democracies against Indigenous communities (as well as other subaltern groups). This exclusion is reinforced by literature in both transitional justice and PACS. Indeed, few transitional justice mechanisms have been successful in dealing with oppression and violations against Indigenous peoples, nor the acknowledgement of the collective impacts of colonialism and settler colonialism (Balint & Evans, 2010; Corntassel & Holder, 2008; Nagy, 2012a).

The preponderance of transitional justice processes in countries around the world and the normative assumptions that shape their practice, would suggest that they be considered as a crucial component of a liberal democratic peacemaking project.[11] PACS has been criticized for its promotion of, and reliance on, an increasingly standardized version of peace known as the

[11] Mac Ginty's (2008a) foundational work on liberal peace processes presumes that such approaches only occur in "post-conflict" societies, and he excludes from his analysis any consideration of peacebuilding in more developed societies, including settler colonial states. As such, he perpetuates the view that western settler states are not in need of peacebuilding. This is a view that needs to be challenged in PACS.

liberal democratic peace. The liberal democratic peace is embodied through the implementation of one-size-fits-all strategies of peacebuilding and peacemaking whereby predominantly western states, international organizations and financial institutions, market forces, as well as non-governmental organizations, promote their version of peace, a peace that usually corresponds with the key tenets of neoliberal capitalism (Sharp, 2014, p. 161). While these interventions may serve to manage conflict, they also serve to support state sovereignty, impose neoliberal restructuring, and maintain the international status quo (MacGinty, 2008a, p. 143; 2008b, pp. 33-36). Norwegian PACS scholar Johan Galtung (1990b) articulated "the west has the power and inclination to institutionalize and implement its conceptions" (p. 314) and the imposition of this liberal peace has served as an important mechanism for the transmission of "western-specific ideas and practices" (MacGinty, 2008a, p. 144). Liberal peacemaking strategies are not necessarily transmitted directly by western states, but rather may be transmitted to individuals in positions of authority in a local context, who then spread the practices and values to local community members, acting, even if unintentionally, as enforcers of the liberal peace (MacGinty, 2008b, p. 54).

While transitional justice was informed by post-World War II attempts to deal with the atrocities committed by Nazi Germany and Japan (e.g., the Nuremberg and Tokyo trials), it was not until the late 1980s that the field fully emerged (Arthur, 2009; Buckley-Zistel, Koloma Beck, Braun, & Mieth, 2014; Hinton, 2010; Nagy, 2008; Sharp, 2014) resulting from a set of interactions between human rights activists, legal scholars, and policy makers who were concerned with transitions to democracy (Arthur, 2009, p. 324). Transitional justice has been referred to as the "handmaiden" to liberal political transitions (Sharp, 2014, p. 150) with its

normative aims grounded in traditional liberal theory (Mutua, 2015, p. 3). These normative underpinnings have served to limit the field's conceptual boundaries including notions of justice, as well as the mechanisms and institutions that emerged as appropriate justice measures. Western ontologies and epistemologies permeate the transitional justice field and fail to account for the ways in which dispossession from land, forced assimilation, and the forbidding of ceremony and traditional language can harm Indigenous identity just as effectively as physical persecution (Arthur, 2012, p. 4; Lawrence, 2010; Woolford, 2009).

The reliance on the human rights discourse has had tangible consequences for the field (Nesiah, 2006, p. 801). The entrenched hierarchy within the human rights discourse that favours the United Nations (UN) International Covenants of Civil and Political Rights and the rights enshrined within it, over the UN International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights has translated into an inability on the part of transitional justice to adequately address systemic economic rights violations and the socio-economic dimensions (and at times source) of conflict (Arbour, 2007; Miller, 2008; Muvingi, 2009). The emphasis on civil and political rights, which tend to be viewed through the lens of individual harm and wrongdoing, fails to account for more collective experiences of harm that come through structural violence, a point that is pertinent in the context of settler colonialism. The result has been a systemic marginalization of issues of socioeconomic transformation that could potentially address inequality, structural violence, redistribution and development and build a sustainable peace (Miller, 2008, p. 266). Moreover, the emphasis on universalism so central to the human rights discourse (Goodale, 2007) has served as a challenge to transitional justice as it is applied in local contexts. Conflict and oppression are rooted in the culture in which they occur and any attempt

to address, ameliorate, and transform these conflicts must take into account local circumstances. Transitional justice's reliance on a one-size-fits-all approach (Lundy & McGovern, 2008, p. 270) fails to account for the on-the-ground realities facing individuals and communities "ranging from social structure, to local knowledge, to complex histories, and to the assumptions that underlie such endeavors" (Hinton, 2010, p. 17). It also fails to acknowledge the ways in which local communities understand justice, such as how it is negotiated within local realities, even when permeated by the global and transnational flows of ideas, media, institutions and ideologies (Goodale, 2007; Hinton, 2010; Inda & Rosaldo, 2002). Ultimately, transitional justice has adopted a conception of justice that is narrow in scope and limited primarily in terms of being individualistic, emphasizing civil and political rights over economic, social and cultural rights and minimizing questions of land.

The notion of transition is equally problematic. Transitional justice propagates an idea that holds western liberal democracies as the pinnacle of development, to which countries recovering from conflict and human rights abuses should aspire. The emphasis on western-style liberal democracy (Lundy & McGovern, 2008, p. 273) is one that is particularly problematic for Indigenous peoples struggling for self-determination. Feminist scholar Sandy Grande (2004) comments that the persistent belief in democracy reflects a belief in the superiority of western social and political structures and points to the ways in which oppression against Indigenous peoples has occurred in the name of civilizing missions and democracy. Alfred (2009b) goes further to assert that for Indigenous communities, to accommodate to the mold of western liberal democracies, as touted by transitional justice, is unjust and in essence is akin to surrendering Indigenous existence (pp. 184-185). Moreover, the idea that transitional justice

mechanisms herald in a “break with the past” (Nagy, 2008, p. 280) ushering in a move towards a more democratic future requires deconstructing in settler states as well as countries recovering from conflict. Given that the foundations of settler colonialism remain entrenched (and the various forms of violence that characterize it), settler colonialism challenges the artificiality of the temporal connotations of transitional justice mechanisms. The idea of transitional justice mechanisms symbolizing a rupture point from an oppressive past also neglects to pay attention to ongoing violence, particularly gender-based violence, which is a key issue in societies recovering from conflict (Nagy, 2008) and in settler colonial contexts (Monture-Angus, 1995; Razack, Smith, & Thobani, 2010). In the Canadian case, this misses an opportunity to address the ways in which settler colonialism has created and reinforced patriarchal systems and structures of power, the result of which has been a “cyclone of pain” (Razack et al., 2010, p. 4) against Indigenous women. Finally, the temporal emphasis in transitional justice as symbolizing an artificial departure from the past fails to adequately address intergenerational trauma (and intergenerational complicity) and the ways in which the experience of injustice, in this case settler colonialism, shapes the condition of life for the dominant population (as benefactors of that oppression) and simultaneously constrains the lives of those who experience that injustice (Balint et al., 2014, p. 199).

It is important to comment on the language utilized in the transitional justice field, particularly the normative associations that are implied by the very term transitional justice, and the possible connotations it makes to colonial and settler colonial projects (Hinton, 2010, p. 7). The notion of progress implied in transitional justice has the potential to enable what Hinton (2010) has referred to as “a sort of neoimperialism that, in a situation of unequal power,

produces, via transitional justice mechanisms, certain forms of knowledge… persons… and practices" (p. 7). Despite the burgeoning of transitional justice mechanisms, the field itself has been characterized by a lack of theory and fragmentation (de Greiff, 2012). It is largely based on implicit assumptions regarding notions of transition and of justice – assumptions that can appear as "commonsensical in western thinking" (Buckley-Zistel et al., 2014, p. 1) yet may make little sense in the local contexts in which transitional justice is applied, and in the settler colonial context, such an approach can serve as a means to perpetuate colonial relations (Hinton, 2010; Nagy, 2008). It is necessary to make explicit the ontological and epistemological foundations of the field and to challenge its assumptions in order to understand the ways in which they influence, and indeed limit, the field. Transitional justice must be decolonized if it is to be effective in addressing and redressing oppression in local contexts, particularly in acknowledging harms committed against Indigenous peoples in post- and settler colonial contexts.

Truth and Reconciliation Commissions. TRCs[12] are temporary bodies, with an official status, that aim to investigate past human rights abuses within a country, during a specified time frame and are (usually) expected to write a final report (Avruch, 2010, p. 34; Hayner, 2011, pp. 3-5). In contrast with the courts, TRCs do not have prosecutorial powers, nor can they act as judicial bodies to investigate those accused of crimes (Chapman & Ball, 2001, p. 2). Instead, they focus on truth-finding – on documenting and acknowledging human rights violations as a

[12] Truth commissions may have other aims. Other examples include Commission on the Truth (El Salvador, 1992-1993); Peace Commission (Uruguay, 2000-2003); Commission for Reception, Truth and Reconciliation (Timor-Leste, 2002-2005). There have been a number of Commissions set up to address issues of the Disappeared (Uganda, 1974; Bolivia, 1982; Argentina, 1985; Sri Lanka, 1994-1997). For a full list see Hayner (2011, pp. 256-284).

step towards reconciliation (Hayner, 2011). Truth commissions have contributed to positive societal changes in a number of contexts by encouraging a growth in local civil society organizations, by legitimization (or delegitimization) of political state actors, by assisting in reframing various political issues, and by legitimizing the claims of marginalized groups (Arthur, 2012, p. 38). Other benefits of TRCs include the search for truth(s) (Hayner, 2011), a public platform or space for victims/Survivors to share their experiences and have those experiences acknowledged (Crocker, 1999), and the transformation of antagonistic intergroup relations that contributed to, and resulted from, the conflict (Aiken, 2010). However, there are also a number of challenges related to TRCs, in both their operation and aftermath. The idea that truth will necessarily lead to reconciliation is one that requires further investigation (Avruch, 2010). There are also concerns that the operation of TRCs will create further division in a population, generating polarization, as well as the potential for re-traumatization of victims as they are asked to share their stories and yet not necessarily be able to share their whole story (Lundy & McGovern, 2008, pp. 270-271). Other fundamental issues concerning local ownership of the process, as well as what may be an unpalatable trade-off between truth and justice on the one hand, and politics on the other, are raised in the literature (Borer, 2006; Hayner, 2011; Lundy & McGovern, 2008).

Education and Reconciliation. The Canadian TRC's Final Report included 94 Calls to Action (2015e) and urged all levels of government to work together to change policies and programs in a concerted effort to address the legacies of the IRSS and to move forward with reconciliation. With reference to the purpose of this study, promoting education for reconciliation features predominantly in the TRC's Calls to Action (2015c, 7–8). In addition to

recommendations that address the legacies of the IRSS (i.e., increased funding to address employment and educational gaps between Indigenous communities and settlers), the TRC called for federal, provincial, and territorial governments to work alongside Survivors, Indigenous peoples, and educators to develop and implement age-appropriate curricula and learning resources as it relates to the IRSS, Treaties, and Indigenous peoples' contributions to Canada. The TRC has highlighted the need to increase funding and resources that can educate teachers on how best to incorporate Indigenous knowledges and teaching methods into the classroom, as well as the need for additional funding to Indigenous schools and educational programming that can foster such approaches. The TRC also outlined the importance of sharing best practices on teaching curricula as it relates to the IRSS and Aboriginal peoples in Canadian history, while also identifying the teacher-training needs related to such a task. The TRC highlighted the need to build student capacity for intercultural understanding, empathy, and mutual respect.

The emphasis on reforming the educational system as a pathway to reconciliation is by no means unique to the Canadian context. In situations of conflict, the school system often plays a critical role – perpetuating and reproducing social inequalities and divisions, as well as serving as a medium for propaganda, misinformation and the dissemination of myth (Ramírez-Barat & Duthie, 2015). At the same time, education can play a central role in resistance to oppression (Jansen, 2009). It can build capacities, resiliency, and help to develop the attitudes and values that can build peace (Ramírez-Barat & Duthie, 2015). As such, and as the Canadian context would seem to suggest, education can both trigger conflict and contribute to peacemaking, acting as both a weapon and a tool (Regan, 2010, p. 99).

Public education is particularly prudent in the face of denial and/or willful ignorance of the harms of the IRSS, as well as in the claims of ignorance by settlers to the perpetuation of settler colonial relations (which is itself a colonial strategy, permissible because of already engrained positions of privilege) (Regan, 2010, p. 41). However, education for reconciliation also requires a transformation of the institutions, practices and policies that embody the education system as just one node in the settler colonial mesh. The remnants of a Eurocentric curriculum remain entrenched in the education system today (Schick, 2014) with negative stereotypes of Indigenous peoples taught in public schools. As the Honourable Murray Sinclair emphasized "our point is, the curriculum is unbalanced. Children should be taught proper Canadian history; that's how respect will be maintained" (cited in Brown, 2015).

In response to the TRC's Calls to Action (2015e), education across all levels and incorporating all disciplines have been undergoing reform in terms of their programs, policies and curriculum (Madden, 2019) to include Indigenous perspectives and worldviews, knowledges, as well as pedagogies. At the same time, and owing directly to the work of Indigenous scholars and activists, local, national and international movements towards advancing Indigenous education challenge conventional teaching methods, curriculum and practice.

Summary

This literature review has provided an overview of settler colonialism with specific reference to the Canadian context and highlighted to need to take an interdisciplinary approach that centres Indigenous perspectives and addresses the disciplinary silos that have been dominant in PACS and transitional justice.

The continued domination of settler colonialism as a structuring force in Canadian society impacts relationships between Indigenous peoples and settlers. Identity is just one impact of that. However, identity, and the ways in which it has been taken up in academia, in activism, and in everyday usage more generally, has been plagued by significant theoretical, methodological, and political challenges (Hall, 1994; Spady, 2017). It has been critiqued for resorting to binaries, and for reducing and flattening different ontologies into fixed and static categories (Tuck & Yang, 2017). And yet it remains a key concept and tool for understanding and potentially transforming settler and Indigenous relations. The TRC and its advocates have repeatedly promoted the education system as playing a key role in reconciliation and through this dissertation, I will highlight some of the barriers and opportunities that exist in education *as* reconciliation.

Chapter 3. Approach to Research and Theoretical Perspective

> The dynamics of power trouble all our doing and all our knowing. Knowledge is always contingent, always standing above an abyss.
> - Verne S. Harris (2007, p. 249)

Introduction

Knowledge is dynamic. It is embedded in social relations, permeated by power dynamics, and can be used as both a tool for social transformation or to maintain the status quo (Potts & Brown, 2005, pp. 260-262). The production of knowledge is inherently political, and assumptions regarding which knowledge is considered legitimate has long been organized so that certain information, produced by certain people, in certain ways, is accepted as truth. Anti-racist scholars Leslie Brown and Susan Strega (2005) contend that by and large, the broad range of approaches in contemporary academia all draw from the same narrow foundation of knowledge that is based on "the social, historical and cultural experiences of white men" (p. 10). The result has been that those individuals and groups on the margins, excluded from positions of power and privilege, have most often been relegated to positions of 'objects' of research, at times 'subjects,' but rarely as 'authors' (Chilisa, 2012, pp. 1-2; Moosa-Mitha, 2005). Research – as a means for learning and finding things out – raises complex questions in terms of notions of truth, power, ownership, access, and representation. This is particularly salient in the context of settler colonial societies.

This chapter provides an overview of the approach to research and knowledge production embraced by this project. Such an overview is necessary given that this research is conducted by a settler in a settler colonial institution in a settler colonial context; it is also

necessary given the subject matter – namely the roles of schools and educators in knowledge production in a settler colonial context. I begin by providing a brief overview of the components of a research paradigm. I then outline the dynamics of mainstream research. Living, working, and researching in a settler colony, I advocate for an anti-colonial, disruptive, and unsettling research approach that brings together key contributions from critical theory and its intersections with, and relevance to, settler colonial theory.

Research Paradigms

Cree scholar Shawn Wilson (2001) describes a research paradigm as "a set of beliefs about the world and about gaining knowledge" that guides the actions of the researcher in their pursuit of knowledge (p. 175). It includes the basic beliefs, assumptions, and principles underlying research. Regardless of the specific nature of the research paradigm, it is comprised of a combination of elements including ontology, epistemology, methodology, and axiology (Hart, 2010, p. 6; Heron & Reason, 1997; Wilson, 2001, 2008). These aspects are not separate entities, but rather are inseparable, intricately related to, and influenced by, the others (Wilson, 2008, p. 70).

Ontology refers to our way of being in the world (Crotty, 1998, p. 10). It is concerned with the nature of existence and the structure of reality – of what you believe to be real (Kovach, 2009, p. 21; Wilson, 2001, p. 175). It includes the "claims and assumptions that are made about the nature of social reality, claims about what exists, what it looks like, what units make it up, and how these units interact with each other" (Grix, 2004, p. 59). It is through ontology that we develop a sense of self, understood in relation to others (Kovach, 2009; Martin & Mirraboopa, 2003, p. 6). Ontology is related to worldview – the way we see the world

and the entrenched lenses that we use to filter and perceive events in the world influences our understandings of what exists, and vice versa (Hart, 2010, p. 7). Worldview includes the "underlying, hidden level of culture…a set of unspoken, implicit rules of behavior and thought that controls everything we do" (Hall, 1983, p. 7). Ontology serves to inform both epistemology and the theoretical perspective.

Epistemology enquires into the "nature of knowledge, its possibility, scope and general basis" (Hamlyn, 1995, p. 242) and notions of truth (Chilisa, 2012, p. 21). It is about how you think about reality (Wilson, 2001, p. 175). Epistemology provides a philosophical grounding on which decisions can be made as to what kinds of knowledge are possible and how to determine if those forms of knowledge are both adequate and legitimate (Crotty, 1998). Epistemology is embedded in the theoretical perspective and in the methodology (Crotty, 1998, p. 3). Given that epistemology focuses on that nature of knowledge, it is important to recognize that social relations are engaged in knowledge production (Kovach, 2009, p. 21).

Wilson (2001) includes methodology as another key aspect of a research paradigm. While a narrow approach to methodology focuses on the methods of research and the tools used, a more encompassing approach includes an articulation of theory that will serve to guide the methods used during the research process (Kovach, 2005, p. 29). Wilson (2001) comments that with methodology, "we are talking about how you are going to use your ways of thinking (epistemology) to gain more knowledge about your reality (ontology)" (p. 175).

While many researchers focus only on ontology, epistemology and methodology as the key aspects of a research paradigm, increasingly, axiology is recognized as a key element. Axiology refers to the set of moral and ethical values that infuse all aspects of the research

paradigm (Wilson, 2001, p. 175). Axiology captures "what is intrinsically worthwhile, what it is about the human condition that is valuable as an end in itself" (Heron & Reason, 1997, p. 286). It requires that we analyze values in order to better understand their meanings, characteristics, origins, purpose, their acceptance as truth, and the influence on people's everyday lives (Chilisa, 2012, p. 21). Axiology has a direct relation on the ethical nature of the research (Wilson, 2008, p. 10). However, it goes beyond the ethical standards of many academic institutions that "do not always do enough to ensure that social science research is deeply ethical, meaningful, or useful for the individual or community being researched" (Tuck & Yang, 2014, p. 223) to include elements of respect and reciprocity, as well as the responsibility and accountability of the researcher (Hart, 2010; Wilson, 2008).

The Privileging of Knowledge in the Academy

The privileging of scientific research emerged with the Enlightenment era, marked by the notion that through scientific reasoning, the rational "man could understand, control and shape the natural, social, political, and economic world" (Kovach, 2005, p. 22). Enlightenment shaped the development of both qualitative and quantitative approaches to research, and inherent in both was the idea that there existed a singular universal truth, applicable in all contexts (Crotty, 1998, p. 18; Kovach, 2005).

Emerging in the 1920s, primarily in North America and western Europe, positivism encapsulated aspects of Enlightenment, reflecting ontological claims that viewed social reality as objective, to be discovered by the researcher (Brown & Strega, 2005, p. 8). It emphasized universalism, neutrality, and individualism (Kovach, 2005, p. 22) and reflected the industrial-centric mode of society at the time. Through research methodologies that were described as

'extractive' in nature, knowledge was produced that served to benefit business and industry, under a banner of progress (Kovach, 2005, p. 22). Positivist research pushed out any alternative ways of knowing: "the rise of the knowledge industry in the twentieth century has narrowed and limited epistemological options" (Tandon, 1988, p. 9). Positivist research can be characterized by a hierarchical relationship between the researcher and the participant, with the participants as the 'object' of research (Potts & Brown, 2005, p. 262). Within the positivist approach, epistemological assumptions are such that unbiased observation and rigorous measurement and evaluation by a neutral observer is said to produce deductive knowledge and information (i.e., truth) on which rational individuals can agree (Brown & Strega, 2005, p. 8; Kovach, 2005, p. 55).

Positivism cemented notions of objectivity and neutrality as key requirements in the production of knowledge, which came to be institutionalized within academia as the standard by which truth claims were to be assessed as legitimate (Brown & Strega, 2005, pp. 2-6; Hill Collins, 2009; Kovach, 2005, p. 26; Madden, 2010, p. 21). While positivism does include qualitative methods, by and large, the emphasis is on quantitative methods. Positivism continues to impact knowledge production and the privileging of western epistemologies. Indeed in some fields, spurred by neoliberal ideologies, positivism is experiencing a resurgence, disproportionately favoured in funding, and influencing social policy with an emphasis on evidence-based practices and outcomes (Brown & Strega, 2005).

Mainstream Research in the Context of Colonial and Settler Colonial Relations

Research is inextricably linked to imperialism, and the policies and practices that are crucial to colonial (and settler colonial projects) were influenced, supported by, and maintained

through scholarly pursuits (Battiste & Youngblood Henderson, 2000, pp. 132-134; Bonilla-Silva & Zuberi, 2008; Carlson, 2016, p. 92; Denzin & Lincoln, 2008, p. 4; Tuck & Yang, 2014; Tuhiwai Smith, 1999/2012). Tuhiwai Smith (1999/2012) famously stated, "research is probably one of the dirtiest words in the Indigenous world's vocabulary" (p. 22). Research is directly and indirectly implicated in the violence of colonialism. Across disciplines and academic fields, research processes have been conducted from a lens that mirrors that of settler colonialism, imbued with a power hierarchy whereby the researcher has ultimate control over the design of the research, the collection of data, the interpretation of its results, and thus its impact (Kovach, 2009).

Research, both qualitative and quantitative, was conducted on Indigenous lands, often without permission, consultation, or involvement of Indigenous peoples, with ownership of the research process and results belonging not to the community, but to the researcher (Martin & Mirraboopa, 2003, p. 1). The methods employed were/are often extractive in nature, with researchers parachuting into a community, space, or place, taking whichever data they felt was necessary, and then leaving with nothing given in return, nor providing any information about that data – the stories shared, the observations made, the responses received, the knowledge gleaned – would be used (Kovach, 2009). The research that resulted from this sort of approach generated what has been referred to as "*terra nullius* research" (Martin & Mirraboopa, 2003, pp. 1-2) where Indigenous peoples were presented as objects of curiosity, to be written about, dispossessed of their knowledges, with no respect for their ownership of that knowledge and experience (Tuhiwai Smith, 1999/2012; Wilson, 2008, pp. 45-47). While the changing research landscape including development of research ethics boards and research protocols has fostered

positive change in contemporary research (e.g., requiring processes of informed consent as a basic standard), this is not to say that the question of responsibility, participation and ownership and the development of reciprocal relationships and accountability of the settler researcher is adequately addressed in the design of research projects that impact Indigenous peoples.

Postcolonial scholar Edward Said (1979) implicates the role of academia in processes of othering, which is a critical consideration in settler colonialism. Other is a term used to refer to subaltern groups marginalized by western thought, processes of othering, and colonial practices (Said, 1979; Spivak, 2010; Tuck & Yang, 2014). However, the intent is not to present the Other as homogenous or void of agency, but rather to recognize the ways in which research has marginalized and silenced these voices (Battiste, 2000). The formal pursuit of knowledge through research, as well as the construction of the Other that result from academia's engagement with various institutions, imageries, literature and societal norms, lend to scholarship's complicity in "making statements about it [the Other], authorizing views of it, describing it, by teaching about it, settling it, ruling over it" (Said 1979, 3). The Other's experience is undermined in order to advance Eurocentric conceptions of knowledge, as noted by Standing Rock Sioux scholar Vine Deloria Jr., who writes:

> Perhaps we should suspect the real motives of the academic community. They have the Indian field well defined and under control. . . Reduction of people to ciphers for purposes of observation seems to be inconsequential to the anthropologist when compared with immediate benefits he can derive, the production of further prestige,

> and the chance to appear as the high priest of American society, orienting and manipulating to his heart's desire (1969/1988).

Most often, this reductionist research presents Indigenous peoples as primitive, backward, and inferior (Battiste, 2000, p. xvi). Moreover, it works to uphold white supremacy and hierarchies, with Eurocentric methodologies presented as the most legitimate and valid.

Cherokee scholar Polly O. Walker (2004) asserts that one of the major legacies, and indeed deliberate processes of colonization was the resulting hegemony of western ontologies and epistemologies, which has led to the systemic and systematic silencing of Indigenous people's worldviews, despite the resistance of Indigenous peoples at the everyday and broader societal levels. Walker (2004) uses the term ontological violence to describe the process of "the forceful introduction of one worldview, to the extent that it marginalizes or suppresses another worldview" (p. 546). In this way, academia has "author-ised certain people to speak and correspondingly silence(d) others, or at least (made) their voices less authoritative" (Usher & Edwards, 1994, p. 90). However, as Tuhiwai Smith (1999/2012) describes, throughout history and in the face of power imbalances, the Other navigates, negotiates, and attempts to resist these processes, with "research [being] a significant site of struggle between the interests and ways of knowing of the west and the interests and ways of resisting of the Other" (p. 31).

In the Canadian setting and in other settler colonial contexts, academic institutions and the settler colonial state were very much entangled in the development and maintenance of settler colonial policies and legislation, the creation of settler narratives of superiority (Regan, 2010; Schick, 2014), as well as myths regarding the Indigenous Other (Ellingson, 2001). Academia was also directly complicit through the administration of medical experiments in

Indigenous communities, such as the use of experimental drugs in treating ear infections at Cecilia Jeffrey Indian Residential School in Kenora (Porter, 2013) or nutritional experiments that intentionally malnourished Indigenous peoples in Northern Manitoba, including children at six residential schools (Mosby, 2013). Research is complicit in settler colonialism "promoting, at times, the projects of Indigenous erasure, the subjugation of peoples of colour, and white supremacy" (Tuck & Guishard, 2013, p. 14). Whether qualitative or quantitative, research continues to be perceived among many Indigenous communities and subaltern groups as a metaphor for colonial knowledge, power, and truth (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008, p. 4) with the violence and exploitative legacy having generated mistrust, animosity, and resistance from Indigenous communities. The remnants of and continued colonial practices in mainstream research point to the necessity of more emancipatory research paradigms that can decentre settler colonial power and Eurocentric knowledge systems.

Emancipatory Paradigms

Emancipatory research paradigms emerged in the 1950s as a challenge to the overwhelming dominance of positivism (Kovach, 2005). There are a wide range of paradigms that can be considered as emancipatory including empirical (e.g., positivism and post-positivism), interpretivist and constructivist (e.g., symbolic interactionism, phenomenology and hermeneutics), and critical approaches (known by variant names such as critical theory, critical pedagogy, and emancipatory education) (Crotty, 1998; Humphries, Mertens, & Truman, 2000; Kemmis, 2008; Kovach, 2005). While some scholars consider critical theory as encompassing epistemologies arising from feminism and Indigenist research, others assert that both feminist and Indigenous scholarship be reflected not as a strand of critical theory, but rather as a

standalone research paradigm (see Garroutte, 2003; Wilson, 2008). It is important to note that while emancipatory approaches have served to challenge the narrow focus on a singular truth that derived from positivism, not all emancipatory approaches are necessarily committed to challenging the dominance of western ontologies and epistemologies nor do they necessarily attempt to dismantle the colonial aspects of mainstream research.

As an emancipatory framework, critical research is informed by a variety of influences including anti-positivism, Marxism (Crotty, 1998, pp. 112-138; Moosa-Mitha, 2005, p. 46), and the Frankfurt School (Crotty, 1998, pp. 139-157; Kemmis, 2008). By its nature, it is research that challenges and disrupts. In critical research, there is a normative commitment to align research to social justice. Critical theories in education offer a lens for understanding the role of schools in perpetuating and subverting the interests of the state, offering a prism through which to understand the roles of schools in (re)producing the race, class, and gender interests of the state and society (Freire, 1970/2005, 1998; Jansen, 2009; McCarthy, 1990). Research within this paradigm has as a central goal not only the critique, but the transformation of, existing social and power relationships (Brown & Strega, 2005, p. 9; Potts & Brown, 2005, p. 260) with the goal of 'critical emancipation' (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2000, p. 282). Critical research differs from positivist approaches in that, while both may aim to generate knowledge for societal benefit, critical research attempts to challenge the entrenched status quo not only in its outcomes, but also in the research process, avoiding the extractive methods that characterize positivism.

Critical research has as its ontological foundation an approach that embraces both an objective and subjective view of reality (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007, p. 26). It is objective in that it acknowledges that there are real forces that influence and constrain the lives of

individuals and groups, while subjective in that it attempts to capture the socially constructed nature of reality and the various interpretations and experiences that make up that reality (Brown & Strega, 2005, p. 9). For theorists in critical research, an important epistemological claim is that all knowledge is considered as relational, socially-constructed, and produced through the interactions of people, groups, and institutions in various social locations (Potts & Brown, 2005, p. 261). Knowledge is produced by power, and is an expression of that power (Cohen et al., 2007, p. 27). There is recognition of multiples truths, and the aim is not only to seek these truths, but also to understand the meanings behind them. Implicit in this search for knowledge is a rejection of the idea of research as value-free, as well as a challenge to existing social biases and hierarchical power relations (Kemmis, 2008; Potts & Brown, 2005, p. 261). Critical approaches demand that the researcher ask questions about who interprets, prioritizes and owns research.

While the relationship between researcher and participant is not as hierarchical as in positivist paradigms, critical researchers have been challenged for their failure to explore and transform unequal power relationships in research (Brown & Strega, 2005, p. 9). Feminists have charged that the critical research paradigm fails to adequately address issues of gender, patriarchy, and sexual politics and fails to problematize the perspective of the "white, male theorist" continuing to privilege reason and rationality (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008, p. 9). Feminists also contend that critical researcher's concern with 'false consciousness' – a Marxist concept that refers to the systematic misrepresentation of dominant social relations in the consciousness of marginalized groups (Brown & Strega, 2005, p. 9), has inadvertently served to re-inscribe the hierarchical power relationship that sees the researcher as informed and the

participant considered as unaware of the issue at hand (Crotty, 1998, p. 121). Moreover, critical theory has also been critiqued for its inability to acknowledge and operate in deeply divided contexts, failing to account for the troubled nature of knowledge, and being unable to grapple with the ways that contending histories and lived realities become embodied with indirect and direct knowledge into the same deeply divided spaces (Jansen, 2009, p. 255).

Critical inquiry has also been criticized by Indigenous researchers who assert that without modification, it will not work as a decolonizing methodology. Lawrence (2010) has argued that critical theory has under-theorized notions of Indigenous identity and diminished the importance of land. In this way, critical theory has persisted in imposing western lenses on Indigenous experiences (Grande, 2004, 2008). Even while working for empowerment, critical theorists continue to treat Indigenous peoples as an essentialized Other who must be spoken for, perpetuating neocolonial, paternalistic relationships (Bishop, 2005). However, as Tuhiwai Smith (2000) suggests, critical inquiry could make a marked contribution to research within Indigenous settings if it were to reject its current attachment to universalistic notions of empowerment and emancipation (p. 229), in favour of more localized approaches that are appropriate to, and relevant for, specific Indigenous groups and communities (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008, p. 6). This could also serve to improve the power relationships between researcher and participant that critical race feminists have problematized.

Why Not Decolonizing?

At the beginning of this research project, I envisioned adopting a decolonizing research paradigm utilizing participatory methods. However, logistical and practical matters were such that it became incredibly difficult to adopt a decolonization methodology. As a graduate

student in a bureaucratic educational institution operating in a settler colony, rules are such that the research must be led by myself, completed within a specific and limited time frame. Both of these concerns, which at first glance appear as practicalities of sorts had a profound limiting factor, namely that it made developing and cultivating genuine, reciprocal relationships with Indigenous communities difficult. This is not to say this cannot be done as a graduate student; however, it was a challenge that when combined with matters such as limited funding (to offer as honorarium, to cover travel costs, etc.), was extremely difficult to overcome.

However, perhaps a more fundamental challenge emerged as I immersed myself in the literature and attended various community events, presentations, and lectures. I began to reflect on whether I, as a settler, could undertake this research project in a manner that would contribute to the repatriation of Indigenous lands in a settler colonial context. I take seriously Tuck and Yang's (2012) assertion that "decolonization is not a metaphor" (pp. 2-3) for a range of social justice causes, that even though are worthwhile causes, can serves to reinforce and re-inscribe the settler colonial project (Zavala, 2013, p. 57). Rather, decolonization is both an event and a process that aims to bring about the repatriation of Indigenous land and life (Alfred, 2009a). Decolonizing research methodologies aim to address the harmful legacies of imperialism on Indigenous peoples, as well as other colonized populations, providing a means by which Indigenous peoples can help reclaim control over Indigenous ways of knowing, and ways of being in the world that have been suppressed through colonization (Battiste, 2000; Tuhiwai Smith, 1999/2012; Zavala, 2013). Cree scholar Michael Anthony Hart (2010) suggests that for research – including the process, content and the outcomes – to be considered as decolonizing, it must incorporate elements of Indigenism, including its knowledge belief system

(ontology and epistemology), methodologies, and axiology. A decolonization paradigm encompasses the restoration of cultural patterns, beliefs and values that were previously suppressed, the re-storying of history, as well as the recovery of languages, stories, and the epistemological foundations (Grande, 2008; Tuhiwai Smith, 1999/2012, p. 89). In decolonizing research, it is not necessarily the particular methods used, but rather about finding and creating the spaces that make research possible to allow for the control and flourishing of Indigenous ontologies and epistemologies (Zavala, 2013). I wanted to ensure that any use of the term decolonizing – be it in referring to a research paradigm, agenda, or methodology – was not tokenistic or metaphorical, and I felt that at this point, adoption of a decolonizing research paradigm was not possible for this study. Whether or not a decolonizing and fully Indigenous research approach is possible or even appropriate for me as a settler researcher (Absolon, 2011; Kovach, 2009) is an area of pursuit beyond the life of my graduate studies.

Unsettling Research Paradigms: Combining Settler Colonial and Critical Theory

Qualitative researchers Egon Guba and Yvonna Lincoln (1994) maintain that "no inquirer… ought to go about the business of inquiry without being clear about just what paradigm informs and guides his or her approach" (p. 116). However, as Hart (2010) warns, despite the importance of researchers making explicit the various aspects of the research paradigm that informs their work, even these aspects may be western impositions, serving as a "strainer" (p. 12) to separate and distill complex Indigenous knowledges into rigid western categories, with language and vocabulary reflecting the dominance of western knowledge. For this project, I am borrowing from both settler colonial and critical theory with the cumulative effect being what I hope can be considered an anti-colonial, anti-racist, unsettling, and

emancipatory research paradigm. Tuhiwai Smith (1999/2012) advocates for the use of hybrid paradigms, asserting that anti-colonial research does not have to be a rejection of all western theory or knowledge. Rather it is about centring Indigenous concerns and worldviews; and uncovering the imperialist agenda and presuppositions that ground and underlie western theorizing and methods; and then approaching research from that position (p. 89).

An anti-colonial research paradigm is one that is proactive against the ideology and practice of colonialism in all its forms (Ashcroft et al., 1998; Tuhiwai Smith, 1999/2012). Because colonialism involves a number of parties in a colonial relationship, anti-colonialism can "include the support and actions of people of the colonizer group" if they are working to challenge the operation of colonialism in institutions and social systems (Hart et al., 2017, p. 333). For settlers, this anti-colonial work may include educating members of their social groups, challenging colonial oppression, and supporting Indigenous peoples' sovereignty and self-determination (Hart et al., 2017).

Stating the obvious – as a starting point for anti-colonial research is the recognition that as a white settler researcher, I am engaging in research that involves Indigenous peoples in a settler colonial society and that I must continually engage in a process "researching back" in order to ensure that my actions do not reinforce any form of oppression (Hart et al., 2017), including power dynamics in the research process and its relations, such as how I describe and theorize the Other (Chilisa, 2012, p. 14). An anti-colonial research paradigm requires that the researcher question the bases for colonial power, and the ways in which these have tended to underlie the construction of knowledge (Mallon, 2012, p. 2). There must be a critical analysis of colonization, as well as an understanding of the ways in which western research has served as a

tool of colonization, reinforcing racism, and legitimizing colonial and settler colonial projects (Absolon & Willett, 2005, p. 120). A research paradigm that is anti-colonial must be committed to valuing, reclaiming, and foregrounding Indigenous voices, ontologies, and epistemologies and making space for voices previously excluded to be heard. This should not be confused with the paternalistic notion of 'giving voice' that is often heard in PACS and other emancipatory frameworks. Rather, it must be grounded in an attempt to amplify the voices of those that have been deliberately silenced, so that they can speak for themselves, be listened to, engage in, and be recognized for their role in knowledge creation (Potts & Brown, 2005, p. 263).

France Winddance Twine (2000) from the Muscogee Creek Nation states that race greatly affects one's authority to make certain knowledge claims. Given the racial implications of the settler colonial project and the ways in which whiteness is normalized, anti-colonial methodology also requires tackling the privilege of whiteness (Baldwin et al., 2011; Leonardo, 2009; Picower, 2009; Proulx, 2018; Razack, 2002; Schick, 2014). Critical race theory, as a framework informed by critical theory, offers additional insights and emerged in part in reaction to the limitations of critical legal theory which had ignored race. Critical race theory explores the socially constructed nature of race across society, in an attempt not only to understand but also to dismantle white supremacy, power imbalances, and systemic racism (Islam, 2000; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). While race and racism are foregrounded in all aspects of the research process, critical race theorists locate an individual/group's identity not only with their racial identification, but also with its intersectionality with class, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, and nation (Crenshaw, 1989; Delgado & Stefancic, 2000; Razack et al., 2010). The legacy of the white savior (Cole, 2012), of the west or the white settler helping the Other,

must be resisted (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008, p. 5) with a focus instead on pushing the settler researchers to recognize our own privilege and then work to dismantle the oppressive systems in place that protect that privilege (Potts & Brown, 2005, p. 258). As part of that process, we must question the assumption that the status of the researcher is a position of superiority, one that entitles us to know the Other.

Research informed by an anti-colonial paradigm has as its ontological basis that it is relational, incorporates narrative and lived experience, and advocates for an integrative approach to critically examine the complex and varied effects that ensue with multiple axes of differentiation intersect in historically specific contexts. It recognizes that reality is formed from different sets of relationships, from which subjective and multiple truths emerge (Wilson, 2008, p. 73). It resists the practice of conceptualizing oppression in terms of unitary categories of race, gender, class, religion, nationality, ethnicity, sexuality, place/space, ability, instead emphasizing their intersection paying attention to the various types of privilege that may or may not shape such relations (Razack et al., 2010, p. 13). Moreover, it aims to uncover and expose various points of view and layers of oppression (Hesse-Biber, 2012, p. 4) calling to attention to the fact that Indigenous peoples historically were the objects of mainstream research, and where research was on issues relating to Indigenous peoples, that knowledge was predominantly constructed by white men (Hesse-Biber, 2012, p. 13; Moosa-Mitha, 2005, p. 55; Sumner, 2006, p. 117).

Anti-colonial research paradigms make space for a variety of different ways of knowing, and embrace a holistic conception of epistemology (Walker, 2004, p. 529). It recognizes that knowledge is produced through the interactions of multiple sources, including the intuitive, the

ontological, and the empirical, in a myriad of ways. Given the emphasis on relationships and relationality, both in terms of ways of knowing and ways of being, it is difficult to make a distinction between ontology and epistemologies, with Wilson (2008) emphasizing the need to see them not as separate, but as equivalents (p. 73). And it is from an epistemology and ontology centred on relationships, methodology and axiology emerge, with relationality permeating both. Experience – both individual and collective – is a legitimate way of knowing, and methods such as storytelling are legitimate ways of sharing that knowledge. Wilson (2008) asserts that the concept of relational accountability is key to axiology in Indigenous research (p. 77). The researcher must be accountable, fulfilling their role and obligation in the research relationship and respecting the rights of participants and any regulations of the community (Chilisa, 2012, p. 22; Wilson, 2008, p. 77). In so doing, the hierarchical relationship between researcher and participant that characterizes traditional research paradigms is challenged, and instead the researcher is engaged in a reciprocal, receptive and responsible relationships with the participant and the community as learners (Hart, 2010, p. 10; Kovach, 2005, p. 28). Any knowledge that the researcher interprets as part of the research process, must be respectful of, and committed to building and cementing relationships already established and representing the communities in question in a respectful manner (Louis, 2007).

Given the harm that has been inflicted on Indigenous communities as a result of scholarly endeavors, safety of research participants is of utmost importance, including issues of confidentiality and non-judgment (Hart, 2010, p. 10). Hart (2010) discussing research in community settings highlights the importance of non-intrusive observation where researchers do not interfere in community processes, and points to the importance of engaging in deep

listening, in a way that goes beyond just hearing, to understanding how participants' sense of being is emotionally and spiritually moved as a result of the research process. This entails that the researcher is self-aware and acknowledges the ways in which their subjective self is part of the research process.

Engaging in an anti-colonial, unsettling, and disruptive research paradigm necessitates that, as a white settler researcher, I am respectful of the relationships involved and committed to fostering and maintaining accountability with research participants and the wider community. Locating oneself as a key way of ensuring that those who participate in knowledge creation are accountable for their own positionality (Absolon & Willett, 2005). Regan (2010) adds that for settler scholars, exploring the complexity of our own positionality (and privilege) is a key responsibility as part of our own anti-colonial struggle. Moreover, it is through locating oneself that we can begin to work to build trust with those whom we are working, informing research participants of our own relatedness, and the ways in which we are invested in, and also accountable to the research process (Absolon & Willett, 2005, p. 104).

Summary

Research and knowledge production are not neutral processes. Regardless of the project, there are always interests that serve to shape the construction of the knowledge produced, and rather than espousing objectivity and neutrality, it is important to be transparent with those interests, and reflect on the ways in which they contribute to the construction of that knowledge (Potts & Brown, 2005, p. 283). Engaging in anti-colonial research requires an understanding of the power relations inherent in the research process and the ways in which external interests as well as the researchers' social location can play a role.

Researchers must be reflexive (Madden, 2010) and transparent (Hart, 2010, p. 10) with participants in the research process and with the audience, and committed to respectful representation of the Other to ensure that it does not present a Eurocentric impression of truth, neutrality, objectivity, and universality (Hill Collins, 2009; Tuhiwai Smith, 1999/2012).

Chapter 4. Research Design

Real power lies with those who design the tools –
it always has.
- Kathi Irwin (1992, p. 5)

Introduction

In order to develop a comprehensive understanding of the views of educators on Indigenous and settler relations, reconciliation, and the possibilities for education *as* reconciliation, a qualitative research design was utilized. In-depth interviews took place between May and December 2019 with twelve research participants (Indigenous and settler) who were identified as individuals working towards reconciliation in the public school system (including elementary and secondary schools) in Winnipeg, Manitoba (MB). In this chapter, I provide a description of the research methodology and methods utilized in this project. I begin by introducing the qualitative research design followed by the research strategy, including sampling and recruitment. I will describe the research participants and provide an overview of the data collection and analysis processes. The chapter will conclude with a review of the ethical protocols, as well as an emphasis on reflexivity as part of the research project.

Research Strategy

Informed by a settler colonial theoretical framework, and infused with elements of critical theory and anti-colonial research paradigm, the research embraced a qualitative research design. Qualitative research can encompass a number of different methods (e.g., interviews, ethnography, focus groups) including arts-based methods (e.g., photovoice, forum theatre). As a common thread, qualitative research is an approach to research that emphasizes the

importance of narrative and lived experience. It allows research participants to voice their experiences in their own words, using their own frames of reference. In this way, it allows for the examination of complex phenomenon that is embedded in the social and cultural worlds of the participants (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, pp. 1-3). Qualitative research allows the researcher to get close to the experiences of participants, interpreting the meaning that participants assign to those experiences, and then working to develop patterns and themes from the data (Patton, 2010). As outlined in Chapter 3, qualitative research is not immune to critiques of complicity in the settler colonial project. Vine Deloria Jr. (1969) describes the role of anthropologists (which is part of my own academic background and training and therefore has influenced this dissertation) as colonizing agents:

> The fundamental thesis of the anthropologist is that people are objects for observation, people are then considered objects for experimentation, for manipulation, and for eventual extinction. The anthropologist thus furnishes the justification for treating Indian people like so many chessmen available for anyone to play with (p. 81).

In adopting an anti-colonial research paradigm described in the previous chapter, I work with care to avoid the continuation of oppression and complicity that has plagued research and academia in the past.

An ethnographic approach was utilized that allowed the research participants to share their understandings of settler and Indigenous relations in Canada and highlight their expertise in the educational field working for reconciliation. Ethnography encompasses both the practice and the textual result that flows from that practice (Madden, 2010). Ethnography is the systematic collection, description, and analysis of data that can result in an understanding of

issues relating to cultural behaviour (Aamodt, 1982). It involves the examination of shared processes, actions, patterns and interactions of individuals, groups and institutions (Madden, 2010; Spradley, 1979). Australian settler anthropologist Raymond Madden (2010) advocates for the transformative ability of ethnography through the writing of the research results in a way that embodies reflexivity and tells a 'storied reality' (p. 10) utilizing thick description (Geertz, 1973/2017).

Sampling and Recruitment. Sampling techniques in research must be consistent with the aims and assumptions inherent in the research design and methods. Purposeful sampling is a technique used in qualitative research that involves identifying participants that are particularly knowledgeable about or experienced in the phenomenon under exploration (Creswell, 2013; Palinkas et al., 2015; Patton, 2002; Saldaña, 2011; Sandelowski, 1995). The power of purposeful sampling lies in selecting participants who can provide in-depth explorations of the issue at hand, with the aim to maximize diversity and provide a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Sandelowski, 1995). While knowledge and experience are key aspects in the selection of participants, practical aspects also play a role, such as the availability and willingness of participants to participate in research, and the ability of those participants to communicate experiences and perspectives in an expressive and reflective manner (Bernard, 2011).

As a starting point, Elder Clayton Sandy, who has many years of experience working in government positions in Education and in the school system shared the names of potential participants that he felt represented the "worker bees of reconciliation" (2019). These worker bees were individuals with whom he had a personal relationship, who worked in the school

system, and were committed to the aims of reconciliation. From there, contact was made by way of email. A snowball sampling tactic was also utilized, whereby those already participating in the study were asked to pass along details of the study to others in their social and professional networks (Noy, 2008; Ritchie, Lewis, & Elam, 2003). The use of the term tactic (as opposed to technique) is deliberate and denotes an approach that is often subversive and seeks to gain valuable knowledge that may not align with the hegemonic power (Noy, 2008). In this way, I was interested in what educators had to say about reconciliation and understanding how educators navigate working within the hierarchy of the educational setting. Information about the project was also shared via social media using my own personal and professional networks (see Appendix A for recruitment poster).

Using purposeful and snowball tactics relied on and activated the existing social networks and relationships of the research participants, and thus sampling was participant-driven (Heckathorn, 1997; Noy, 2008). This is an important point in the context of the research question – all of the research participants possessed forms of social capital. Social capital is "the sum of the resources, actual or virtual, that accrue to an individual or a group by virtue of possessing a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance or recognition" (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 119). Indeed, social capital was identified by all of the research participants as an important part of their work, their activism, and their self-care.

Research Participants. The cumulative result of utilizing these sampling tactics, combined with the selection of in-depth interviews as the research method, was a dynamic knowledge base created with twelve research participants who are employees of publicly-

funded schools in Manitoba. Of these twelve participants, seven identified as Indigenous (First Nations and Métis). Three Indigenous participants referred to themselves in the context of the interview as *white-presenting* and/or *white-passing*, referring to the notion that they may not "look visibly Indigenous" (Jang, Daum, & Bear, 2016). The remaining five participants are settlers, all of whom were white. All participants completed their high school and university education in MB and continued to work in the province. Table 1 summarizes the demographic characteristics of the research participants.

Characteristics	N	Percentage
Sex		
Female	12	100%
Male	0	0
Identity		
Indigenous **(*Self-identified as white presenting)**	7 (*3)	58.3%
Settler	5	41.7%
Position		
Classroom Educator	5	41.7%
Clinician	1	8.3%
Support Person	3	25%
School Administration	1	8.3%
Senior Administration	2	16.7%
Geographic Location		
Urban	10	83.3%
Rural/Northern	2	16.7%
Years in Education		
0-5 years	1	8.3%
5-10 years	4	33.3%
10-15 years	5	41.7%
15-20	2	16.7%

Table 1. Characteristics of Research Participants

Schools in Manitoba are represented by school divisions/districts. This includes rural divisions and districts, as well as urban divisions, of which there are six in the city of Winnipeg.

Participants in the project represented all of the Winnipeg divisions (see Figure 1), and also included two rural/northern divisions (unnamed for confidentiality) (see Figure 2).

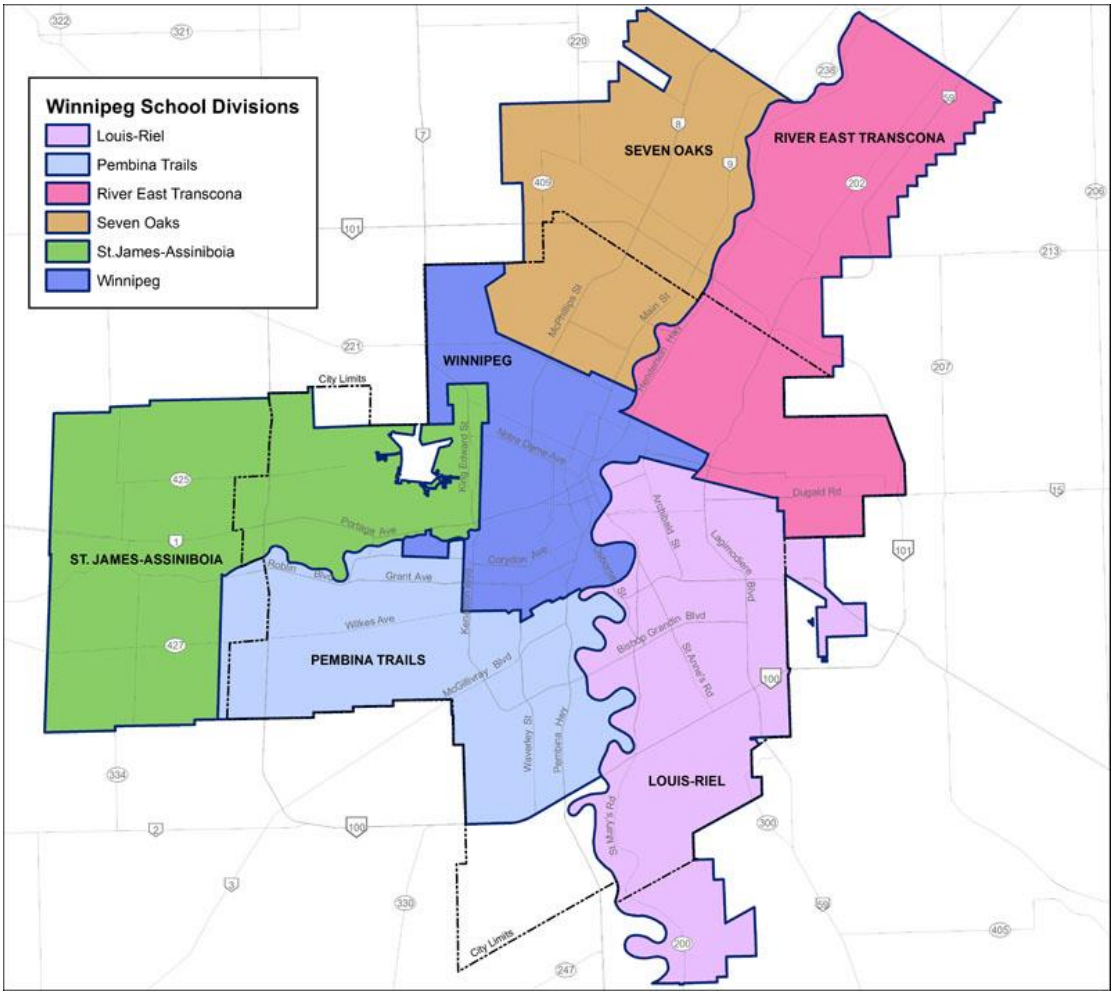


Figure 1. Map of School Divisions in city of Winnipeg (Manitoba Conservation, n.d.)

Participants worked in a variety of capacities in their respective divisions, including as classroom educators at the junior high and high school levels (n=5), support roles (n=3), clinical positions (n=1), school administration (i.e., principal) (n=1) and senior administration (i.e., superintendent) (n=2). Participants ranged in their experience working in the education system, from 5 to 18 years of service, with the average being 10.6 years of experience in the educational system.

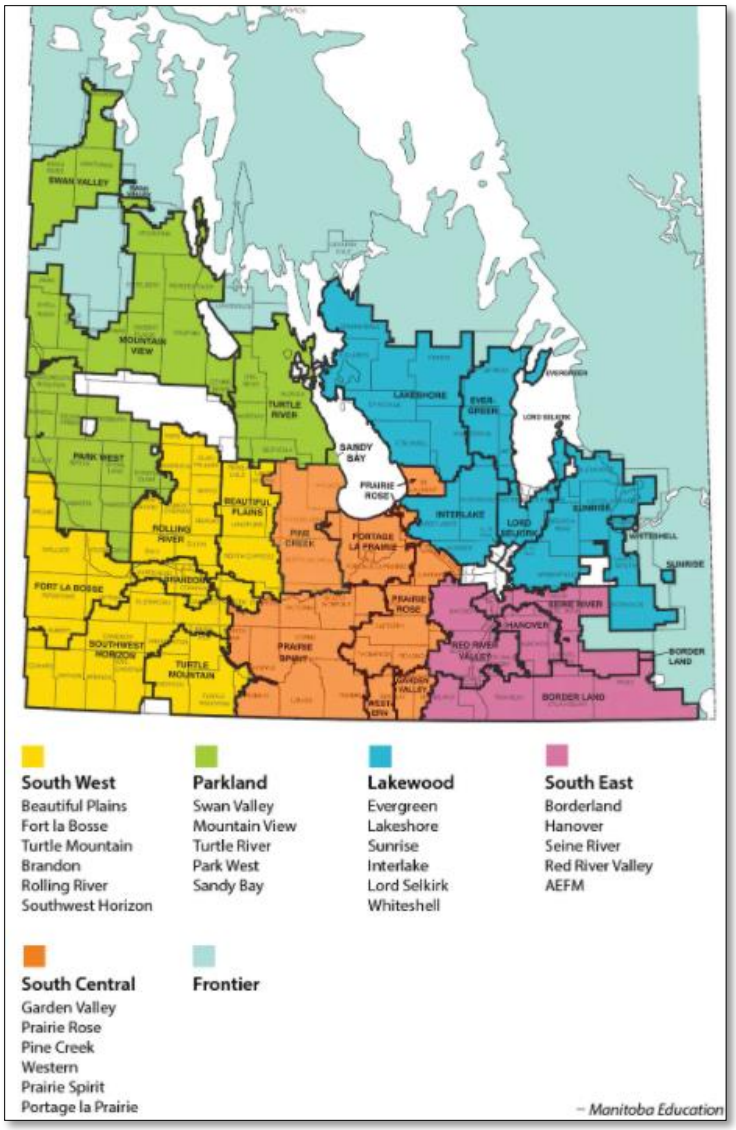


Figure 2. Map of Rural Manitoba School Divisions (2017)

The lack of diversity when it comes to the sex of the participants was not initially planned. However, as recruitment and data collection were underway, (with three-quarters of the participants already interviewed for the project), a decision was made not to begin a more targeted recruitment campaign aimed at reaching potential male interviewees, and instead to continue to rely on the social networks of participants', which was, by chance, primarily female. This lack of representation can be considered as a limitation in the study (see Chapter 9).

However, it is also important to acknowledge that the field of education, particularly at the level of teachers (as opposed to administration), is overwhelmingly female (Robinson, White, & Robinson, 2019). The most recent data on the composition of educators in MB compiled for the period of 2007-2008, suggests that of the 13,772 educators in the province, 9,467 of those educators were female, amounting to 68.7% (Manitoba Education Citizenship and Youth, 2008). Similarly for 2008, of the 558 graduates of the Faculty of Education at the University of Manitoba, 402 (72%) were female (Office of Institutional Analysis, 2019). This over-representation of female graduates from the Faculty of Education has remained consistent in recent years, with the University of Manitoba estimating that of the 444 graduates in 2018, 328 (or 74%) were female (Office of Institutional Analysis, 2019). Elder Clayton Sandy and settler Raymond Currie, who co-facilitate *Circles of Reconciliation* in Winnipeg, shared anecdotally a similar finding on the composition of their reconciliation dialogue groups (personal communication, 2019). While they are careful not to suggest that males are not engaging in reconciliation-based activities and initiatives, they have also experienced a higher number of female participants than male.

Data Collection and Procedures

Individuals who agreed to participate in the research project took part in face-to-face, semi-structured, open-ended ethnographic interviews (Madden, 2010; Spradley, 1979). Open-ended interviews engage the interviewee as a knowledgeable person about the particular phenomenon under examination and affords participants the opportunity to focus on the most salient and accessible aspects of their perspectives of the phenomenon (Barbour, 2008; Morse & Field, 1995). Open-ended interviews encourage detailed responses, facilitate the generation

and creation of new knowledge, and guide subsequent interpretation. They were an opportunity to explore a diversity of experiences, opinions, and meanings, and allowed for flexibility to explore unexpected or unintended areas of investigation that were important for participants (Dunn, 2016; George & Stratford, 2016). Initially, a demographic form was created that was intended to allow for a description of the sample. However, after the first interviews, this form was abandoned. It seemed to detract from the conversational nature of the interview and in many ways was redundant – all of the information contained in the demographic form was captured through the subsequent conversations with participants. All interviews took place at a location of their choosing – spaces that would be both convenient and comfortable for participants. This included the university campus, participants' homes, as well as coffee shops. Interviews began after the completion of the informed consent form, as part of a larger consent process. A very small gift was offered to participants in appreciation for their time.

To facilitate the interviewing process, an interview guide with open-ended questions was created (see Appendix B). In ethnographic interviews, open-ended questions are designed in a manner that attempt to encourage the participant to emphasize the descriptive, the structural, and the comparative (Madden, 2010). The apparent looseness of the open-ended interview is deceptive, given that a skilled interviewer has completed extensive preparation for data collection (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999). For my interview guide, the opening question began with, "Can you please tell me a little bit about yourself?" The intent of this question was to offer an opportunity to get to know the participants and to permit space for them to feel comfortable in the interview setting. However, participants used this as an opportunity to share

those salient aspects of their identity resulting from living and growing up in settler colonial society (all participants were born and raised in MB). Additional interview questions and possible probes were also developed based on a thorough review of the literature, however these were used ad-hoc based on the flow of the interview with each particular participant. All participants were also offered an opportunity to contribute questions to the interview guide that would be used for subsequent interviews with other participants.

Strategies to facilitate discussion in the context of the interview included the use of silence, requests for examples, the use of hypothetical situations, expressing cultural ignorance (i.e., "I never knew that" in response to something the participant has said), repeating and incorporating the participant's terms and language, as well as follow-up questions to expand on participant's narratives (Spradley, 1979). At times, my own active listening in the interview context also served to facilitate discussion in that my own pauses as I thought over responses and considered the next question provided a space for the interviewee to continue talking. Perhaps stemming from the participant-driven nature of the recruitment strategy, or perhaps just as a result of the personal characteristics of the participants, all participants spoke openly in the interview context, exhibited high degree of interest in sharing their experiences and perspectives and as such, guided the conversation. Interviews ranged from 60 minutes, to a two-part interview that totalled 185 minutes. The average recorded interview time was 86 minutes in length. Interviews were usually followed by time to debrief, and often to share another cup of coffee. During this time, many participants also interviewed me – asking questions regarding my interest in the topic and my goals for the research.

With the participants' permission, all interviews were recorded via a digital audio recorder. In order to preserve their authenticity and to allow for continuity, they were transcribed verbatim by the researcher within one week of the interview. Verbatim transcription ensure that the individual quality of each participants voice and experiences were maintained, bringing in their individuality, their tone, as well as their humour to the research encounter (Bell, 2013). It is these direct quotations that are presented in the research findings, with only artefacts of dialogue such as 'um' or 'ah' removed. Transcription by the researcher allowed for initial immersion in the data and also served to enhance the accuracy of the transcription (Bailey, 2008; Baxter & Eyles, 1997). Standard transcription conventions were utilized across all the research transcripts (Bailey, 2008).

Field notes were also captured and recorded. Field notes can capture any non-verbal behaviours and communication processes, the interview context, reflection on theoretical questions and methodological notes (Madden, 2010; Saldaña, 2015). This included jottings during the interview itself – of a brief nature, making notes of items of significance, and possible connections to the themes of the study (Bernard, 2011). Participants were offered the opportunity to review these jottings in the context of the interview. Full field notes then followed, written within two days of the interview. When there was a delay between the interview and writing of field notes, reminders were made via voice memos kept on the audio recorder. These more consolidated field notes provided a detailed description of the recruitment process for that particular interviewee, the interview setting and context, non-verbal behaviours and communication processes, main findings, key phrases, and a reflection on theoretical questions and methodological notes (Madden, 2010; Saldaña, 2015).

Data Analysis and Interpretation

Ethnographic data analysis is an iterative process that occurs concurrently with recruitment and data collection, as well as with a re-engagement with the relevant literature (Madden, 2010; Morse & Field, 1995). Critical theory and settler colonialism were used as conceptual frameworks for the analysis process. Through this process of analysis, both emic and etic perspectives were considered. As is common in ethnographic analysis, synthesizing the relevant literature and theories (etic perspective) with the careful examination of the experiences and words/phrases used by the participants (emic) allowed for a broadening of perspectives (Madden, 2010; Olive, 2014).

The first step in the analysis of the data involved organizing it in a way that allowed for the data to be examined systematically. Coding is referred to as the "process of identifying persistent words, phrases, themes, or concepts within the data so that the underlying patterns can be identified and analyzed" (Morse & Field, 1996, p. 197). A two-stage, albeit circular, approach to coding ensued. First-round coding was data-driven, and following by a second round of a priori theory-informed coding (Saldaña, 2015). While there is a clear progression with stages outlined, these stages are not distinct and apart; to think of coding in such a way would create an artificial boundary and mechanistic approach to coding that mimics a positivist approach to research and therefore runs the risk of concealing the power relationships involved in the creation of knowledge (Tuck & Yang, 2014). In this way, I acknowledge that I as the researcher have made decisions about the knowledge created through an iterative process that attempted to make sense of the data.

Initial analysis – or first cycle coding – involved a line-by-line approach that began as soon as field notes were complete. In this first cycle, I became fully immersed in the data, reading through the field notes and the interview transcripts to identify significant statements, sentences or sentence clusters that stood out as thematic of the research questions (Creswell, 2013, 2014; Madden, 2010; Rogers, 2018; Saldaña, 2015). In this way, the research questions and interview guide served as a 'broad structural scaffold' (Sylvestre et al., 2019). This included statements and/or experiences that stood out, occurred frequently, or held significance (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999).

Codes were applied to both short phrases as well as larger paragraphs; at times, multiple codes were applied to the same paragraph. A code book was created in Microsoft Word listing various categories. Organization was assisted with a table of contents at the beginning of the document. Verbatim or *in vivo* (meaning 'in that which is alive') coding was used as a means of emphasizing participant's voices in the data (Saldaña, 2015, p. 91). Short analytic memos were written outlining what was meant by the codes created, emerging patterns, categories, and key concepts (Rogers, 2018), as well as a space for reflection on the codes. Codes relevant to settler colonialism (e.g., systems, structures, dispossession, oppression identity) and critical theory (e.g., race, power, privilege, resistance, subversion) were selected for further analysis.

As more interviews, transcription, and first round coding was complete, I would return to each transcript, reviewing and comparing the first with the next, and so on. Second cycle coding began in order to re-analyze and refine the coded data from the first cycle and to identify the patterns in the categories. With settler colonial and critical theory serving as an a

priori conceptual frame, I attempted to reach a deeper level of analysis from the created codebook. This included searching for latent meanings and the structural assumptions that may have informed participants' narratives. Working from the created codebook, I also incorporated the process of axial coding to explore the relationships among the codes (Simmons, 2017). Codes were changed, added, and at times removed from the codebook altogether, in order refine and develop the themes of the study. While the purpose of this study is not to compare and contrast differences between participants with different backgrounds (i.e., Indigenous or settler), it became apparent that these different social locations contributed significantly to the experiences of these participants.

There were elements from the interviews that were not included in the coding process. Two Indigenous research participants shared stories that included an in-depth description of the trauma and intergenerational trauma they endured as young adults, stemming from the continued operation of settler colonialism in Canada. These stories of suffering were relevant to settler colonialism, though were not directly related to reconciliation nor to their role in the education system. The stories were offered voluntarily by those research participants (i.e., they were not in response to a specific question in the interview guide), to which I listened empathetically without asking further questions. In my field notes from those interviews, I attempted to grapple with whether my response to those particular stories and to the participants in the interview setting had been adequate or appropriate. I reflected on my own limitations as a researcher, and how my own discomfort with the very personal nature of those stories of suffering may have impacted the research encounter. I gave much thought to my role as a settler researcher and the ways in which much social sciences research has been damaged-

centred when it comes to Indigenous groups and other marginalized, subaltern communities (Tuck, 2009). In this way, marginalized groups are invited to speak and to share their stories only when it is centred on their experience of pain and oppression (hooks, 1990a; Tuck & Yang, 2014). After much consideration as to whether I could respectfully honour these parts of the participants' narratives, I reached out to each of the participants, requesting a phone conversation. I thanked each participant again for sharing their time, their expertise, and their experiences with me. I shared my worries that this dissertation would not offer an appropriate platform to acknowledge the complexity of the issues and of their suffering and healing (i.e., that my dissertation would not do them, nor their stories, justice). In conversation with each of the participants, we decided to exclude these specific stories from the data analysis process, and thus from this dissertation. However, with the permission of these individuals, these stories and experiences remained as part of their complete interview transcript as a means of honouring their story and its complexity.[13]

Protocols, Ethical Considerations, and Reflexivity

Prior to the research study beginning, an ethics application was submitted to and approved by the University of Manitoba's Joint Faculty Research Ethics Board (see Appendix C) with representation from diverse fields/faculties/institutes such as anthropology, architecture, economics, environment and geography, history, libraries, nutritional science, Native studies, PACS, philosophy, women's and gender studies, as well as community representatives. Potential participants were provided with written information about the research project prior

[13] I am grateful to Dr. Julie Pelletier for her guidance in (re)writing this section, for embracing its nuance and its complexity, and for encouraging a more thorough consideration of my role as a settler researcher in the research encounter.

to agreeing to meet with the researcher. Prior to interviews beginning, the research and participants reviewed the informed consent form discussing the research objectives, as well as issues relating to confidentiality. This was often a time for participants to ask questions of the researcher. No significant ethical concerns were raised by participants. The consent form served as only one part of an ongoing process of informed consent. Participants were assured that they had the opportunity to withdraw from the study at any time (up until the point of submission of the dissertation).

Early on in the data collection process, an Indigenous research participant requested that it would be useful to have an option on the consent form that would allow participants the opportunity to be named (either by their real name or a pseudonym) and/or to self-identify as an Indigenous person. As such, an amendment was submitted to, and approved by, the University's Joint Faculty Research Ethics Board for a revised informed consent form (see Appendix D) that included such options for participants. However, after reviewing her interview transcript, this particular interviewee requested that in fact she would prefer that her responses remain anonymous. She joked that "if my boss read that, [they] could figure out who I was. LOL." (email communication, 2019). This participant was offered the opportunity to retract or edit any part of the interview transcripts, but responded that anonymity would be sufficient. All other participants also requested to remain anonymous.

As implied from the anecdote presented above, all research participants were offered an opportunity to review their transcripts. Member checking is a technique used by researchers that involves the return of research transcripts to participants for their review as an attempt to ensure the accuracy and validity of the data (Birt, Scott, Cavers, Campbell, & Walter, 2016). It

has been critiqued for constraining the work of the researcher, while also running the risk of being superficial approach to ensuring validity (Sandelowski, 1993). Member checking has also been critiqued from a constructivist stance as offering participants an opportunity to reconstruct narratives (Birt et al., 2016). After careful consideration of these critiques, and after hearing from the research participants themselves who upon completion of the interview would jokingly express their interest in "how they did" and as an expression of transparency, I decided to offer member checking to all participants. All but two participants were interested in receiving a copy of their transcripts for member checking. The transcripts were sent within a week of the interview to the participants, with transcription conventions noted. Any identifying information that was to be anonymized later in the analysis process was left intact in the transcript, though highlighted to demonstrate the recognition that it was potentially identifying. Aside from the anecdote shared above that requested that a participant be considered as anonymous, no changes were requested by participants to the research transcripts.

As a means of ensuring that the findings as interpreted by the researcher resonated with their experiences, the results chapters of this study were circulated to the research participants prior to submitting the dissertation to the university. The full dissertation was then submitted to participants prior to the oral defense. While time constraints limited the amount of time that could be offered to participants to review their findings, no changes were requested.

Throughout this research process, it was crucial that as a settler researcher that I positioned myself not as an expert, but rather as a learner. Regan (2010) cautions that while

this may serve as a source of tension, it is crucial that "non-Indigenous researchers fully embrace the uncomfortable epistemological tension that comes with the realization that they can never fully know the Other" in an attempt to acknowledge the complexity of difference rather than to continue to perpetuate its erasure (p. 26). During the research process, I included space in both my field notes and coding memos to reflect not on the research process but also to reflect on what I as a researcher brought to the process including my own biases, judgements and identity – those great questions in life – Where do I come from? Where am I going? Why am I here? and Who am I? (Sinclair, 2014a, 2014b). I also was able to utilize and further hone the notion of sustaining a mindful presence – a framework that was developed collaboratively with nursing researcher Roberta L. Woodgate in her work with youth populations in the area of health research. This includes qualities such as (i) openness and curiosity, (ii) empathy and acceptance, (iii) receptive attention and deep listening, (iv) relationally engagement, (v) flexibility and reflexivity, (vi) self-awareness and self-regulation, and (vii) being nonjudgmental and respectful to guide the researcher through the research process (Woodgate, Tennent, & Zurba, 2017).

Summary

This research project embraced a qualitative research design. Semi-structured, one-on-one interviews took place with 12 research participants yielding rich data. All research participants will be invited to the defence of this dissertation. They will also receive a copy of the dissertation as well as a summary document of the findings. Given that many participants shared their use of social media for increasing their networks and gaining insight into best practices, visual summaries of the findings and recommendations have also been included

throughout the dissertation, and will be later shared with educators and on social media. Future knowledge dissemination strategies include sharing the results of this project with educational institutions in MB, as well as submissions of publications in journals targeted on the topical areas of the findings, namely settler colonial relations, truth and reconciliation in Canada, and education *as* reconciliation. It is through this data collection and analysis process that a comprehensive exploration of educators' perspectives on Indigenous and settler relations, reconciliation, and the possibilities for education *as* reconciliation was undertaken.

Chapter 5. Findings Part 1: Settler Colonial Relations in Canada

> This is the problem of history. We cannot know that which we were not there to see and hear and experience for ourselves. We must rely upon the words of others. Those who were there in the olden days, they told stories to the children so that the children would know, so that the children could tell stories to their children. And so on, and so on. But now we come upon the problem of conflicting stories… Whose story do we believe, then? We believe the one who has the power. He is the one who gets to write the story. So when you study history, you must always ask yourself, whose story am I missing? Whose voice was suppressed so that this voice could come forth? Once you have figured that out, you must find that story too. From there, you begin to get a clearer, yet still imperfect picture.
>
> - Yaa Gyasi (2016, pp. 226-227)

Introduction

In the following four chapters, I will use the narratives of research participants to explore the following four thematic areas: (1) Settler Colonial Relations in Canada; (2) Truth and Reconciliation in Canada; (3) Barriers to Education *as* Reconciliation; and (4) Doing the Work Towards Education *as* Reconciliation. In the first three findings chapters, the findings will be followed with a discussion of the findings and the literature. The fourth findings chapter will weave participants' experiences and words with a discussion of the literature and recommendations for policy and education. Presentation of the findings using this thematic approach is deliberate with dissemination of the findings in mind.

Settler colonialism shapes our society. It has filtered in to the social milieu, impacting our identities, structuring historical and contemporary Indigenous-settler relations. In this first findings chapter, I explore how participants understood the social relations between Indigenous peoples and settlers, utilizing the following three themes i) (Settler) Colonial Chains; ii) We Live in "Different Worlds"; and iii) Different Worlds, Destructive Stories. For a summary of the themes and subthemes, see Table 2.

(Settler) Colonial Chains

(Settler) colonial chains refers to the ways that participants – settlers and Indigenous alike – conceptualize settler colonialism as permeating all aspects of society, filtering into the social milieu, including the social worlds they live in as educators. It should be noted that while the majority of participants referred to contemporary society as colonial, rather than settler colonial, their narratives demonstrate their understanding of the ongoing nature of settler colonialism and its impacts on the lived experiences of different groups, in different ways. Participants referenced the interaction of the macro level structures (i.e., government policy, economics) with systems at meso levels (i.e., the education system, justice system, child welfare system) and tied this directly to the systemic oppression and domination of Indigenous communities in Canada. An Indigenous participant described:

> This country is chained to colonialism and colonial ways of thinking. And for Brown people, we have actually been weighed down by these chains every single day of our lives since colonization.

In a similar vein, a settler participant referred to the ongoing need to "cut the ties that bind us to colonial ways, to colonial presence." An Indigenous participant reflected on her experiences

working with Indigenous youth in schools. She described these youth as being acutely aware of the ways in which their lives were impacted by the chains of settler colonialism. She spoke of her frustration about the ways in which the responses of Indigenous peoples, when they resist and become active against these settler colonial systems, are often filtered through these same colonial lenses and frames:

> You know those people who are in the 16-25 age gap, they are mobilizing, they are very much aware. It [the system] gotta [*sic*] change, it has got to change. They are tired of waiting. They are tired of waiting for the government to take the lead role and for systems to change. You know Indigenous youth are trying to reconnect to their cultural birthright, especially those children who have had their lives and identities stolen by the system. You know these different groups and movements, like [local Indigenous social movements and organizations], different art projects, it's peaceful. But even the ones where there is conflict what else are humans who have been dispossessed for so long, they are getting, they are angry, and it's righteous, it's justified. People act like it's not. We are still losing so many [Indigenous peoples] to suicide, and to murder, and addictions which is a form of slow suicide. And being lost in systems that still colonize, that still take a foreign concept of identity and living life as a human and socialize them with that so they don't even grow up, you know they are Brown on the outside, but they are white on the inside. And I think that the young people that I work with, that I know, would agree that it needs to be the young people and Indigenous people that are leading.

White supremacy and racism. All of the research participants, both Indigenous and settlers, acknowledged the ways in which racism, white privilege, and white supremacy had impacted who they are and their social identities, and structured societal relations in Canada. Indigenous participants were specific in discussing racism as anti-Indigenous. This specification is important not for the purpose of creating a hierarchy of racial oppression, but rather to show the ways in which various aspects of identity and oppression intersect specific to the Indigenous experience in Canada. This specificity of anti-Indigenous racism also becomes important in considerations of the ways in which Indigenous experiences are minimized in supposed multicultural curriculum and classrooms (as noted in Chapter 7) and are crucial if we are to consider how best to implement anti-racist practices in education.

Micro level experiences of racism and discrimination were discussed extensively by Indigenous participants. An Indigenous participant shared that experiences of anti-Indigenous racism in her childhood had had lasting impacts:

> I'd have girls teasing me about being a dirty half breed. To this day, when I am at work or somewhere public, when I am in the bathroom, I very meticulously wash my hands, you know. It's crazy. [Short pause]. I still carry that, even with all my healing.

Another Indigenous participant, who identified as white-presenting, shared that she witnesses anti-Indigenous racism and its impacts on not only the students she works with, but on her own children within the school system:

> I have two blond hair boys, and two with dark hair, dark eyes. And I can see the differences in how they were treated. Even in the school system, like the administration at one point thought that the two boys of mine with dark hair were children in care and

> treated them as such and I lost it right. Lost it…. And [pause], them being called a stupid Indian by their peers.

Another Indigenous participant, who explicitly stated her reluctance to reduce racism to the micro level, also felt that it could not be ignored particularly in contexts that lack Indigenous representation. She pointed to the impact of the classroom teacher as an authority source and their influence on the classroom environment, including how students interact and relate to each other. She explained that her experiences directly influence how she teaches today:

> I'm not trying to reduce it to you know this one bad teacher cause [*sic*] you do that and it takes away from the bigger picture. But it really shows you the power of teachers. And in my experience, all my teachers were white. And that hasn't actually changed for my kids. I had teachers say some really really [*sic*] terrible things to me. You know that I would never amount to anything. And they are this authority figure. So when you know they are talking about us as Indians or whatever or telling us that we won't amount, like being less than, it makes it okay for the other kids to do that. It gives permission for everyone else I guess. You know the schoolyard reflects the classroom. It's like that the world over. It's something I've never let go. They are deep wounds.

Participants spoke at length about racism at the structural level, such as a comment from an Indigenous participant who stated:

> … As a society I think that race and racism is so ingrained in who we are and in our systems and our structures and in our organizations that it lends ourselves to the perpetual marginalization of Indigenous people in Canada.

Participants spoke of racism as being both obvious and subtle. Indigenous participants described living in a society "stifled by racism" and of workplaces permeated by "thinly veiled but also not so thinly veiled racism." Yet despite its obvious nature, participants also expressed frustration at the lack of attention to racism, with one settler participant referring to it as the "elephant in the room, it's there, it's palpable. We just don't want to acknowledge it." An Indigenous participant, who self-identified as white presenting, shared that she lived a sheltered childhood, "unaware of the current state of affairs" in Canada. However, things changed as she entered the working world:

> Shortly after starting work [in an inner city high school in Winnipeg], I would say that my eyes were opened in a very very [*sic*] big way. And, I began to very quickly realize that things are not all well with the world. And that things like racism are alive and well in Manitoba and in Canada but maybe we are just a bit more quieter [*sic*] and kinder about our racism [sigh].

Anti-Indigenous racism was often intensified when particular news stories relating to Indigenous peoples' activism or social movements gained prominence in the media. A settler participant commented on the intensity of anti-Indigenous racism and prejudice across the country, particularly in the online arena:

> You know the level to which Indigenous peoples really are subject to racism at all levels across this country. It's vile. For a while I had to stop going online for the news. I know online comments are bad any time, you know that anonymity and just being behind a screen it seems to bring out the worst in people. But you look at any news story that has any mention of Indigenous peoples even if it's a feel-good stories, it is utterly horrifying.

> And how do we get past that? How do we fight that? And how do you challenge that when it's the subtle stuff [racism or acts of racism] too from people in your life? Or when it's people who should know better.

Many Indigenous participants spoke of internalized racism. An Indigenous participant disclosed that for "a long time, I truly believed [that] us Native people were scary… you don't trust them" and how she had come to feel ashamed of herself both for "being who I was, but also feeling that way about my community." Indigenous participants who identified as white-presenting spoke of shame, as well as conflicting feelings – of sadness, of confusion, of anger, and of privilege – that resulted in being witness to anti-Indigenous racism, prejudice, and discrimination against other Indigenous peoples, but not directly targeted, simply by nature of having fairer skin. An Indigenous participant recalled:

> What's been interesting though is that the racism and bias of people will come out when they're with me. Because they see me, I am very white presenting. White presenting is a very popular term now…Well a lot of First Nations people now will use the word…. And I've heard some really racist comments, and that's where I will say, I am Indigenous. But I myself struggle with my own identity. I am blond haired, blue eyed. Is it right for me to, you know, I have never experienced (racism), except for that short time in school, I have white privilege because of how I look. So I feel that by identifying as Indigenous, it takes away from the experiences of visibly Indigenous peoples, that's how I feel. So I still am torn with that.

White supremacy, whiteness, and white privilege is an area that is was touched on by many participants, settlers and Indigenous alike. A white-presenting Indigenous participant

explained “white privilege is that I have been able to hide my Indigeneity through my skin and my hair colour.” A settler participant spoke in-depth about her childhood as the daughter of white immigrant, English-speaking parents. She recalled that the privileges she has experienced intersect directly with her whiteness:

> I’m not taking away from the barriers they [parents] faced. Things were not easy. But they weren’t made more difficult because of their race. The very fact that I am white, that my husband is white, you know where we are today and the privileges our kids have – you can’t separate those things.

Some settler participants were cognizant of the ways in which their whiteness, especially when intersecting with other factors such as socioeconomic class and education, contributed to a degree of privilege in Canada. However, one settler participant wanted to be sure that her white privilege was not considered as any more important than other aspects of her identity: “I am coming from a white privilege. I am. And I am coming from a different vantage point. And that is important. But not more important, you know it’s not the only story.” On the other hand, for another settler participant, it was crucial that whiteness and race were foregrounded as profoundly impacting her lens of the world and the ways in which she is privileged as a result in a settler colonial setting:

> Being white anywhere, but especially being white here in Canada – it filters everything. And I need to be conscious of that every single day. But there’s such a reluctance to do that I find especially in teaching. And I’m not trying to position myself as above anyone else not at all. It has taken me time to get here. And trust me, I still make mistakes and

I've had friends point that out. But by the very virtue of my whiteness I have such a privilege here.

For many Indigenous participants, they often had to take on the role of explaining the dominance of white supremacy and white privilege as part of the Canadian fabric of society to white settlers. While this act was identified by participants as necessary, it was also mentioned as a source of exhaustion, yet another burden placed on Indigenous peoples. An Indigenous participant shared:

> And even with [friends and family], like I have to challenge [their] white privilege. Like they didn't have that education, that knowledge, about Canada's history and all the impacts. And it's a history that's still playing out. It's not as if it's done. There's still systemic racism. It may be hard for people with privilege to see. So having lots of arguments trying to get them to see that this is not just a matter of getting over it and getting a job. Like there is so much work. And I use my own self. I tell them, you have seen how much work I have had to do, and I still have to do. And there are people who have had way worse trauma than me through no fault of their own, other than my being born Brown in a country that was created with the thought to extinguish the Brown race. To move us aside for civilization. They are trying. But it can be so tiring.

"Way, way back." Just as oppression becomes normalized in settler colonial relations, so too are the privileges of settler colonialism – unquestioned and accepted as the status quo. The same Indigenous participant who referred to Canada's systems and structures as being chained to colonialism, went on to state "that sometimes when you're weighed down by something so long, it just becomes the way it is." Similarly, a settler participant shared

"sometimes you don't think to question the world you live in because you don't know any other way of being." An Indigenous participant, who described herself as living a privileged childhood, shared one example of how she believes the normalization of settler colonialism and the marginalization of Indigenous communities serves as a means of abdicating any sense of responsibility for ongoing inequities within Canadian society:

> When I first started teaching, I started volunteering at [. . .] community centre which is literally like a fifteen step walk to the school and into the community. And I would say that that experience was life changing for me. Very very [sic] eye opening in so many ways. Like why is it that on television when I was growing up I would see commercials asking for people to donate money to a third world country to feed somebody who is hungry when there are children who are hungry in Winnipeg? And not to say that we don't need to take care of all people, I want to be clear that I am not suggesting that for a minute. But people are very quick to think it is socially acceptable to donate money to a child in another country. You know, it is things that people are praised for, like what a good human you are for doing that, like you are so philanthropic. You know, and then…in Manitoba, one of the highest child poverty rates in Canada and yet it is not as socially acceptable to be thinking about supporting our own community or our own people in that way.

Every Indigenous participant was explicit in their reference to the present-day operation of settler colonialism, though at times only used the language of 'colonialism' as a shorthand. However, for some settler participants in the project, throughout the interview they referred to colonialism in the Canadian context as a thing of the past, referring to it in a past tense and

using historical examples. In these cases, there was a recognition of intergenerational impacts of colonialism (including trauma and inequities), but there was limited connection to contemporary dispossession and the ongoing nature of settler colonialism. A settler participant spoke repeatedly and passionately about the importance of Canada "coming to terms with the things that this country did back then" with no acknowledgement of the ways in which the contemporary settler colonial state apparatus remains in place. The following quote from another settler participant is reflective of the overall sentiment shared by these settler participants:

> Well I think that education has such a beautiful opportunity to kind of right the wrongs in a certain way of policies and regulations and procedures that were just awful, that were part of an educational system way, way, way back in history you know but not too far back in history.

While making room for a possibility that this was a matter of a linguistic trope or reflective of common parlance, it also raises another likely scenario – that these participants believed themselves to be committed to improving relationships between Indigenous and settler communities, but in a way that does not acknowledge the ongoing occupation and dispossession of Indigenous peoples from the land.

We Live in "Different Worlds"

The oppression and marginalization of Indigenous peoples, and the deep inequities that result in Canadian society between settlers and Indigenous peoples are so much so that multiple participants in this research project, without probing, referred to settlers and Indigenous peoples as living in "different worlds" with different lived experiences and histories.

From the interview guide, the initial question asked to all research participants was "can you tell me a little about yourself." This question was intended as a gentle introduction to the research setting. However, in almost all of the research interviews, this question raised key insights into the ways in which settler colonialism had structured the lives and relations of different social groups, negatively impacting Indigenous participants (particularly their identity) in ways that was not experienced by settler participants. The impacts of settler colonialism on identity, whether Indigenous or settler, also intersected with their professional identities and their role as educators (to be explored later in Chapter 7).

"Making it." All settler participants began their response to this initial question by highlighting their family background. Settler participants offered narratives with common threads – first-, second- and third-generation immigrants who arrived in Canada from various European nations, predominantly English-speaking countries; white; and working-class backgrounds. Participants spoke with pride on their ancestors' work ethic and the sacrifices they would have made. These traits were credited by many of the settler participants for their families' upward social mobility, and stories were shared of how earlier generations worked to overcome economic hardship to "make it" in Manitoba. A settler participant who shared her family's experience of settlement in rural Manitoba many years ago was representative of the narratives of other settler participants:

> Let me think. It would have been my great, great, great [short pause] grandparents. It's like many of the stories you hear, you know, they came here essentially with nothing but the clothes on their backs. And my great, great grandfather, he was born on that farm. That's how long it has been there…And everything they would have had to

> overcome. If you think about it, the work [long pause]. Sometimes I can't imagine how they did it.

This idea of "making it" was echoed by yet another settler participant who described first her grandparents and then her parents working long hours in multiple low-wage positions within an urban environment and "slowly but surely squirreling money away for that dream… to give us a better life… for the things they never had."

Settler participants shared positive experiences from their schooling in childhood, where their identity was reaffirmed and indeed celebrated. A settler participant who grew up in a Winnipeg inner-city neighborhood that included a large Indigenous population shared her mixed feelings about her educational experiences, explaining that she is trying to come to terms with the ways in which her educational experience was positive for her as an individual in that it created an opportunity for her to thrive; but that also left her with substantial gaps in knowing and in some ways created an insulated pocket of privilege in the community:

> So although I think my education was really positive, it had a lot of aspects that I think in Residential Schools you know, they were taken away. I had a lot of opportunity to practice my cultural and spiritual practices. I had a lot of opportunities to celebrate my identity. I had all of these things that were nurtured at the school…. So I had a very positive school experience and I see what kind of education I want for my children. However, I do see that it was missing a huge component.

Rupture and rigidity. In response to that same question, "can you tell me a little bit about yourself," Indigenous participants offered multiple stories that demonstrated a very "different world" than that described by settlers – one where their identities were not

celebrated, but rather were denied, ruptured, made rigid, and at times erased. An Indigenous participant spoke at length about how her own identity as an Indigenous woman was often at odds with a supposed national identity:

> I struggle to say I'm Canadian. Would you identify with a nation, with a state, with a people that for so long have denied your people, your history, who you are? [Long pause]. I guess my account of being Canadian doesn't always fit.

A young Indigenous woman who sat in the next booth to us at local coffee shop, interrupted our conversation. She wanted to let the participant know that what she said resonated with her, and her own struggles. With her permission, this young Cree woman, wanted to add "I was not born in Canada, but rather Canada was born on my land" (Name withheld, 2019).

Indigenous participants spoke of their identities as having been negatively impacted by oppressive systems and structures, policy, racism (including internalized racism), and trauma. An Indigenous participant recalled her own experience growing up in a rural town, surrounded by two First Nations. She stated that the failure to acknowledge her identity and specifically her Indigeneity, erased her sense of who she was:

> We were geographically close to two reserves, and there was always this tension between the white citizens of [town], and the Indigenous citizens of [reserves]. It was always there. It was like we lived in different worlds. So that reinforced my little child's thinking, we don't talk about my Brown skin, or my Indianness or anything like that [Sigh].

Indigenous participants spoke about the ways in which colonization had created a narrowed view of what it meant to be Indigenous:

> I get angry with assumptions that you have to be super ceremonial to be Indigenous … Being Indigenous doesn't mean wearing a Medicine Bag and wearing a skirt though you can choose to do that. Being Indigenous is just an inherent part of who you are. But I understand why people do it [make assumptions about Indigeneity] … Colonization has done that right.

An Indigenous participant shared in detail her sadness that her family members had "turn[ed] their back on their culture and their community, just being so unable to face who they are" as a direct result of settler colonial processes, specifically, the IRSS and systemic racism. Another Indigenous participant recalled her father's dismissal of his Indigeneity and of internalized racism, sharing that her own attempts to reconnect with her identity were at first resisted by her father:

> Well for the first many years, I'd say, Dad I went to a sweat lodge and we did this… He'd be like what the hell did you do that for. Like he was very critical of it. Wouldn't talk about his childhood, couldn't talk about his childhood, because there were big gaps…layers and layers of trauma right, both in his family, and in his community [community name withdrawn] … Those gaps in his memory, it wasn't just resistance, it was protective for him. He had internalized that racism, those stereotypes, those narratives, and we would debate. He'd say those god damn Indians, they are drunk and lazy. And I would counter every one of them. You know, Dad, do you understand why people would do that? Do you know the history of Canada? Do you know about the Sixties Scoop and colonization and women losing their status? Residential Schools, and Pass System, and even your own stories Dad of how people would put you down, they

> wouldn't trust you, wouldn't give you a chance, just because you are Brown. You know, do you know about that? And he didn't. He still, he refused to, he always wanted to blame his own people, our own people. And then through time, he would listen more.

Identity was an area that was particularly complex for those Indigenous participants who described themselves as white-presenting as summed up in the following rhetorical question pondered by a white-presenting Indigenous participant "I am always feeling this struggle in understanding you know who am I. You know, am I Aboriginal? Am I white? Am I something in between?" Another Indigenous participant who self-identified as white-presenting explained that for her, settler colonialism created a deep sense of struggle over her identity. She co-opted the label "angry Indian" to describe her feelings:

> I don't want to say I'm the "angry Indian" [air quotes used by participant]. But I am. I'm angry that my Grandmother had to live in a society where she had to lie about who she was. I am angry that I feel that I don't know how to identify. I am angry that I have family members who are extremely racist to hide their own identity. It angers me that we live in that kind of society where people still do that you know.

White-presenting Indigenous participants cited experiences in their personal and professional lives where they felt like "I didn't know where I belonged"; the education system was explicitly mentioned by many of these participants. A white-presenting Indigenous participant recalled the social distance in her workplace between her white colleagues and the few Indigenous colleagues who also worked there:

> …you know the few Indigenous staff, they were always by themselves. Quietly talking by themselves in a little cluster, and you know all these loud noisy white people around

them, and I remember always looking to them and wanting to go talk to them, and wanting to, but just feeling that gap.

Another white-presenting Indigenous participant shared the advice she received as she entered the workplace from an Elder who explained that she had a "foot in both worlds" and how she has come to see this unique positionality as one that comes with great responsibility:

> So as an Indigenous person, I don't look overtly Indigenous and I had somebody, I had an Elder say to me… that I had a foot in both worlds. I didn't quite understand at the time because I was so young. But I understand what she means now right. Like I can sit in spaces with colleagues that look far more Indigenous than I look, and I can say the same things that they say and they won't be listened to in the same manner that I will right. And so maybe like my articulation is different, or the colour of my skin is different, or the way I look is different, but I fit in both places, right. So I own that with tremendous responsibility and feel the need to like say things that other people might not say in a kind and professional way, but to push boundaries with people. And sometimes say things that maybe make people uncomfortable. Because I can. And I feel like it is my responsibility, my ethical responsibility to do so.

Indigenous participants also reflected on the challenges they directly endured in their attempts to navigate, subvert, and resist the settler colonial structures of oppression in their "worlds." For almost all of the Indigenous participants in the project, this struggle with multiple and interlocking identities, of both rupture and rigidity, and of ongoing structural oppression, required a long process of healing. An Indigenous participant shared that much of her adult life has revolved around attempts to "reconcile who I am and who my family are." Other

Indigenous participants shared the importance of attending ceremonies, of connecting with the land, and with Elders and knowledge keepers. An Indigenous participant shared that connecting with Elders helped her to challenge her own internalized racism. She also credited these connections with Elders as "saving my life from a path of destruction and moving towards healing and a pride in who I am as a [Indigenous] woman." Reconnecting to land was highlighted as crucial to healing and to revival, as summed up in the following statement from an Indigenous participant:

> You know, because we have been depicted as not smart enough, not good enough, not strong enough. [Long pause]. Our ways of knowing and being have sustained us for thousands of years before white ways have ever come, and we need to come full circle to that, especially because what is happening to our planet. I worry for my children, I don't know what kind of world they are going to live in. We are all Indigenous to some place, we all have a home country, but again it is tied to the land. You know, your identity, your blood, your history, your language, your stories, your ceremonies, they all come from that land where your people have lived, and from connecting to the land.

The distance between different worlds. The social, spatial, and economic distance between Indigenous peoples and settlers, and how it was interpreted by participants, served to reinforce the feeling of living in "different worlds." All of the settler participants, whether they were raised in rural and urban contexts, shared that they grew up knowing little, if anything, related to the historic and contemporary oppression of Indigenous peoples and the issues facing Indigenous communities living in a settler colonial context. They also noted that they had limited contact with Indigenous peoples and communities throughout their childhood, and in

many cases, well into their adult lives. A settler participant who grew up in an urban neighbourhood that was home to a large Indigenous population, reflected on a childhood being in the same physical space as Indigenous peoples, but experiencing social (and perhaps also social and political) distance from Indigenous peoples, a distance that was imposed from within her community, and encouraged by the larger society.

> I keep kind of thinking about how my experience in [inner city neighbourhood in Winnipeg] and how it was different from a lot of the community. I was outside of that, totally different world, and I see that there is a derogatory feeling about [neighbourhood], about people from [neighbourhood]. You know this whole kind of inner city, or the different terms people use for it, but it is often viewed in a negative way. But yet I realize that I am outside of that, so I have been interrogating you know why that is.

For many settler participants, this social distance contributed to their ignorance of the issues affecting Indigenous peoples. For a settler participant, this ignorance was even more palpable given that her high school was physically located next to a Residential School:

> In hindsight, I can say that I did not know much, I did not get that education. My parents didn't know better … And then when I started to ask questions that's when you realize how ignorant I was. So when I think about myself in high school, sitting in my high school right next to it was a Residential School right, how did I not know that?

The role of place and of the proximity of structures of settler colonialism (e.g., Residential Schools, reserve communities) accentuated feelings of ignorance for another settler participant who attended high school in a rural area. She shared an account of attending high

school and coming into contact with a number of Indigenous students. She explained that she now felt ashamed of the racism that these young Indigenous children would have endured at the hands of the community:

> You know, that still sits with me. Here we were in [rural town], thinking you know who are *they* [emphasis by participant] to be coming to our school. Like we knew they came from the reserve but I didn't really know what that meant. And so really it should have been who were *we* [emphasis by participant] to be there.

The role of place had a similar resonance in the urban setting, where physical proximity did not necessarily equate with social proximity. A settler participant shared the following anecdote about attending private school in a neighbourhood that was also home to a large Indigenous population:

> My school was like this pocket. Because we still had, like the communities were struggling, and sometimes even we had people coming into the school yard and it was like someone is coming, like this outsider. And you know, people wanted to keep our school "safe and isolated" [air quotes used by participant] from the community in a way.

Different Worlds, Destructive Stories

Repeatedly in the interviews, and often without probing, participants – settlers and Indigenous participants alike – reflected on stories they heard perpetuated about Indigenous peoples. Overwhelmingly, these stories painted Indigenous peoples in a negative light. These stories reflected the asymmetrical power relations in society, and were created and shared not by Indigenous peoples but rather by settler society, including the media, but also in settler participants' interactions with family and social groups (which were for the majority of settler

participants – single-identity social groups). Importantly, the role of schools was identified as feeding these destructive stories. Participants recalled the ways in which their own educational experience failed to provide them with an accurate account of history of the relationships between Indigenous and settler Canadians and that contributed to the perpetuation of negative stereotypes of Indigenous peoples and thus reinforcing the 'different worlds' was highlighted.

"Convenient stories." A settler participant recalled her own childhood experiences and the stereotypes that she referred to these stories as the "most convenient" story in that it was the most visible and readily available in the context of extended social distance between groups:

> So, I'm first generation Canadian. My parents immigrated here while they were still young and got married and had us children. And this was like the sixties. When you live in it, you just feel like you know, so you know how your parents speak of Indigenous people, how society speaks of Indigenous people you know, you don't really have the foresight to ask questions. In our society, we unfortunately, I guess this is a blanket statement, but we tend to just see what's visible and what's out there, because it is the most convenient story, the most convenient thing and it's there. But it takes a little bit more effort to bring in the goodness… But we just tend to look at a specific journey and think that's how all of them are and that's so not true.

All participants unanimously shared that their formal education on colonial encounters and Indigenous and settler relationships was minimal, if not non-existent, during high school as well as in their university education. A settler participant shared:

> I went to high school… and got my university education right here in Manitoba. And I did well in school that's the thing, I wanted to learn, I was that keen student right. But I didn't get taught a thing about Canada's colonial history. Nothing.

When asked to reflect on her high school education and whether she felt she received an education with regards to the impact of settler colonialism on Indigenous communities, an Indigenous participant responded without hesitation:

> Like in high school… Absolutely- no, no, never. I mean and it's still that way today right. It's always, like I remember having to learn all about England, I mean who the hell cares about all the Kings of England. They still do that in schools, you know.

Settler and Indigenous participants shared that their own educational experience downplayed, if not ignored, the colonial violence perpetuated against Indigenous communities. A settler participant spoke of her education as being a "whitewashed history. Land and Treaties were never related to violence or coercion." Instead, it was an education that presented the dispossession of Indigenous peoples from their land as:

> …The Treaties were a special gift that we gave the First Nations people. I mean we would hear Indigenous peoples live in Tipis, blah, blah, blah. But that's all that it ever was. A very white, European western perspective in schooling. (Indigenous participant).

> You know, there was nothing, absolutely nothing about how this country is steeped in colonial violence. And I took Canadian history in university. It just, it still boggles my mind that I made it through high school, university. And I didn't know until well into my adult years. Well into my teaching sadly. (Settler participant).

Participants spoke of an education that not only had substantial gaps in knowledge of Canadian history – a null curriculum; but also a racist curriculum that contributed to the perpetuation of stereotypes about Indigenous peoples. For some Indigenous participants in the project, the colonial nature of the curriculum contributed to a sense of disconnect as they looked around to their own home environments and communities, even from a young age:

> I wasn't learning about Indigenous people other than the fact that school was calling them savages and I wasn't seeing myself like that right. So it didn't-, I wasn't able to reconcile that when I was in school and looking at a textbook and seeing Indigenous people dressed in a loincloth, like with a spear. Just very ridiculous. And not to say that that rhetoric isn't being shared in some schools even today, because it is.

As participants reflected on their own education and instances where they were taught about Indigenous peoples or cultures, they explained that it was a superficial and homogenizing approach to culture and identity. Moreover, it was a presentation of Indigenous cultural practices from a western lens – a pattern that continues to this day. A settler participant recalled having to speak to her child's daycare just recently after her children came home with drawings of tepees and images of what she assumed to be Indigenous people gathered outside the teepees. She was adamant that "there was no teaching with that exercise." The Eurocentric lens was recalled by another settler participant who reflected on the ways in which Indigenous cultural practices were presented to her as a student:

> Now that I sit here and think about it, I think we were taught about Potlatch. But it wasn't from an Indigenous perspective right. It wasn't about the importance of this ceremony or what this meant to the community. It was presented as this practice that

> we saw, and I mean the whole class was white, like it was painted as this absurd, like outdated tradition. And it just had no meaning to us. And so the ban was made to make sense.

The impacts of both this null and racist colonial curriculum contributed to feelings of shame and internalized racism that linger, even today for many of the Indigenous participants in the project, pointing to the power that educational institutions and agents hold in society. An Indigenous participant summed up this pain:

> Oh gosh, when I was in school, I would be reading the paragraphs about scalping and savages in our history books and feeling so embarrassed and putting my head down… We were tall people, like my Dad was 6'4"… but all of me was shrinking, sulking with my shoulders.

Turning points. Almost every settler participant in the project shared that it was a long process for them to become aware of, and recognize, that the myths and stories they had received about both Indigenous peoples and the issues affecting Indigenous communities in Canada, were problematic. Throughout the interviews, and often without prompting, participants shared of moments in society that they referred to as indicative of a change in the relationship between the Canadian state, settlers, and Indigenous peoples. These state-based initiatives, such as former Prime Minister Harper's (2008) Statement of Apology to Former Students of Indian Residential Schools in June 2008, prompted their own shift towards reconciliation, and had particular resonance for them in their roles as educator. One settler participant shared:

> I think 2008 really was when you know the acknowledgement you know from then Prime Minister Stephen Harper. I think that was a pivotal point I believe in the acceptance and that [short pause] acknowledgement was huge in the educational field.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission, and more specifically, the release of its Summary Report (2015c) and the Calls to Action (2015e) were also identified by all settlers in the project as instrumental in prompting that change. One settler participant shared:

> Well I think the TRC findings [in 2012]... I think that was a big big [*sic*] one. And I think that knowledge base was more, it was more out there. And I think that it gave people the permission to do what they needed to do because there was a big chunk that talk about the educational institutions and it felt like here is now some concrete evidence and some concrete ideas of how we can move forward that is accepted by government, by the Canadian population to a certain degree.

Some settler participants also touched on the importance of creating relationships that bridged the social distance between themselves and Indigenous peoples, often in the context of their university education or in a professional capacity. Settler participants also acknowledged learning from Indigenous Elders and Knowledge Keepers, however the importance of these relationships was more in reference to the importance of mentorship for their continued learning and commitment to reconciliation, than it was to a turning point that resulted in them changing their perception, or at least recognizing the flawed nature of their previous ways of thinking.

These turning points were not limited to settler participants. However, for Indigenous participants in the project, they were less related to state-based initiatives (e.g., formal

apologies) and instead were linked to their identities as Indigenous peoples: to lived experiences, to healing, to stories of resistance, and to Indigenous resurgence. An Indigenous participant shared that for her, graduating from university was a turning point for both herself and her grandmother explaining that it signified for her family "that things could be different." In another instance, an Indigenous participant shared a story of how her father had for years internalized racism and been ashamed of his Indigeneity. She shared how slowly over the years, her father had come to see his being Indigenous with a sense of pride in part as a result of her own work in re-connecting to her culture:

> I remember the first time [my father acknowledged his identity], we were talking and I was doing my you know, teaching my Dad about his own history and he was a smart man. He only got to Grade 3, poverty and family dysfunction forced him to leave school and you know help out his family, but he was a very smart man, a thinker like his daughter. And so he thought about it for a while, you know, what I was saying, and all I remember Pauline, is him saying you know us Aboriginal people, and that's all I can remember but, the moment I heard him say us, I was like Dad, did you hear what you said, and he's like what, and I said, us. And he kinda [*sic*] chuckled to himself, you know, shyly, and it was you know, so cute. And from then on, he was more open. One time I had my drum out, and he picked it up and started just playing around and you know [participant singing] … It was just beautiful.

The turning points were also symbolic demonstrations of Indigenous peoples' strength and resiliency in the face of historic and contemporary oppression. Other turning points were indicative of Indigenous social movements and symbolic of Indigenous resurgence and the

struggle for Indigenous peoples' rights to self-determination and sovereignty. Repeatedly in the narratives of Indigenous participants, the 1990 Siege of Kanehsatà:ke and Kahnawake in Oka, Quebec (commonly referred to as the "Oka crisis") was identified as a key turning point. Rooted in years of struggle over control of unceded territory, in the summer months of 1990 it reached a 'crisis point' over a proposed golf course to be built on Kanehsatà:ke Mohawk lands.[14] The siege of the land by the Canadian state and its military apparatus was considered as symbolic of the fight for Indigenous land rights in Canada. An Indigenous participant, who was a teenager at the time, recalled:

> I vividly remember sitting around the television with my family. We didn't say anything. But I felt it inside. This pride. I mean I'm not trying to downplay the violence we faced [long pause]. I felt this strength. [Long pause]. For the first time, it was as if there was a wave of change across the country and I'd even say across the world. You know it was as if people were opening their eyes, cause [*sic*] things were not all well and good here.

Another Indigenous participant recalled:

> I mean, I look at the news today, and have things gotten better in this country? I don't know. And I think what I find more concerning is hearing the reactions of Canadians to things like Oka. Like we are framed as the angry Indians….our anger isn't the problem. But I was proud of that. Of the way our people stood. Of the way our Elders are standing tall today. And when I think of that, I feel scared, but strong.

[14] For more information 1990 Siege of Kanehsatà:ke and Kahnawake in Oka, Quebec see: Ellen Gabriel (2016, 2019) and edited collection by Leanne Betasamosake Simpson and Kiera L. Ladner *(2010)*.

It is crucial to acknowledge, that as long as Indigenous peoples have experienced oppression by settler colonial state apparatus, they have also resisted that systemic oppression at the individual and collective levels. An Indigenous participant recalled witnessing a recent interaction between police and an Indigenous woman in Winnipeg, explaining that the incident was reflective not only of the oppression of Indigenous peoples, but importantly how she saw Indigenous people attempt to resist and subvert systems of power in a settler colonial context:

> 'Cause [*sic*] if you drive just here, you see our people suffering and it fucking hurts. It hurts. Just even yesterday, there's a group of people who are houseless, not homeless, *this* [emphasis by participant, pointing outside] is their home. They depend on [Indigenous community organization]. And there goes the Winnipeg Police charging up, and there is the young Indigenous woman with her hands up. And she's grinning. Grinning. And I'm stopped at the red light, and I'm watching this, her grin, it's almost like she's kind of toying with them … It is resistance. It really was. It was kinda [*sic*] like yeah you know I know you got the tasers and the guns and you are slamming me trying to put your handcuffs on me because I'm Brown and I'm female and I'm in a spot that is racialized, but I'm going to make a spectacle of what you are doing right now, and she did. And I thought, you know, right on. But there is still so many people suffering and hurting…But it needs to be *our* people who lead it. The settlers or Canadians or white people, or whatever people want to call themselves, they need to they need to follow. *We* [emphasis by participant] need to take the lead. And they need to step back to let us take our place…. And we are going to stumble and we are going to stutter and that's okay. Have some patience and give us time, but let us lead. And the Grandmothers. It

really needs to be the Grandmothers. Because that spirit of patriarchy has gotten its way in…. So it needs to be our Grandmothers. But we are slowly. There are little pockets. And once we connect, look out, look out [laughing].

Discussion

Themes and Subthemes	Description
(Settler) Colonial Chains	
White supremacy and racism.	Settler colonialism bolsters and is bolstered by white supremacy. The symptoms of this white supremacy are anti-Indigenous racism, discrimination, and white privilege.
"Way, Way, back."	Structures of settler colonialism are invisiblized. This normalization allows for colonialism to be framed as something in the past among the dominant social imaginary.
We Live in "Different Worlds"	
"Making it."	Settler colonialism frames the identity of settlers. This settler identity is the foundation of a settler imaginary.
Rupture and rigidity.	Settler colonial processes have ruptured and made rigid Indigenous identities, with lasting intergenerational impacts.
The distance between worlds.	Place and space have furthered the social, spatial, and economic distance between settlers and Indigenous peoples in their different worlds.
Different Worlds, Destructive Stories	
Stories of convenience.	Settler colonialism relies on stories or myths created by settler society about the Indigenous Other. The Other is viewed through a white gaze. These destructive stories are maintained in the schools through the curriculum.
Turning points.	There are moments that can disrupt stories of convenience. For settlers, this is often linked to state-based initiatives. While for Indigenous peoples, it is highlighting their ongoing resistance, activism, and resurgence against setter colonial oppression.

Table 2. Settler Colonial Relations: Summary of themes and subthemes

Participants in this project highlighted the complexity of the settler colonial mesh (Woolford, 2013, 2014). The mesh in their narratives was entangled and weighed down, chained to colonial processes including the structures (e.g., the economic and political arena, ideology) and systems (e.g., child welfare system, legal system), and polices of settler colonial society. The settler colonial mesh is not an abstract phenomenon; as demonstrated by the

narratives of participants it has concrete impacts – framing subject positions, lived experiences, as well as relations in and between social groups. As highlighted in the narratives of participants, the settler colonial mesh and its apparatus (i.e., chains) dominate, dehumanize, and oppress Indigenous peoples, while replicating the supremacy of the settler state and settler populations, therefore maintaining the status quo (Thobani, 2007).

Writing in 1969, anti-colonial writer Albert Memmi explores how racism operates in such a way that it works to justify the status quo, including privileges, as well as the use of aggression or violence. Memmi (1969) identifies racist strategies employed by colonial powers to maintain control over Indigenous populations, including stressing real or imaginary differences between groups, assigning values to those differences, claiming those values are absolute and final, and then using those values to justify that status quo, including any aggression or privileges, that which is present or that which is to come (pp. 185-186). These racist strategies and the resulting real and imaginary differences were a key aspect of participants' narratives.

Despite the biological fiction of race, racial categories remain pervasive with real bearing on everyday life: "bodies are visually read, understood, and narrated by means of symbolic meanings and associations" (Omi & Winant, 2014, p. 13). These racial categories are ever changing, varying across time and space. Participants were explicit in their reference to racism, and its corollary white privilege, as structuring the net cast over society, impacting identities, contributing to social distance, exacerbating inequities, and limiting opportunities for Indigenous peoples in the Canadian context. Indigenous and settler participants shared numerous examples of both overt racism, as well as more subtle and entrenched colonial views

of Indigenous inferiority. The emphasis on racism and white supremacy by participants is particularly timely in light of contemporary and transnational social movements that aim to address racial justice and dismantle white supremacy.

White supremacy bolsters and is bolstered by the settler colonial state (Bonds & Inwood, 2016; Walia, 2014, 2021). While participants used the language of white privilege – an analytic frame through which we can interrogate those taken-for-granted benefits that are afforded by nature of whiteness (Kendi, 2019; Leonardo, 2004; Pulido, 2015; Richardson, 2017), they spoke of the practices (i.e., police violence), structures, and systems (i.e., education system) that produced white privilege in the first place, reinforcing that whiteness and white supremacy are at work. Such an understanding highlights the hegemony of whiteness as a social construct (Baldwin et al., 2011; Carr, 2016; Schick, 2000) and internalized system that embraces those perceived to be white, and assigns them certain power and privileges (Wngz & Delaire, 2020). It also acknowledges the racial dehumanization, racial exploitation, and racial domination that characterize settler colonial societies (Bonds & Inwood, 2016; Cacho, 2014; Razack, 2002; Thobani, 2007). Race as a *chain* of settler colonialism has resonance in its conceptualization in terms of its viscosity, its thickness and the "ways in which certain bodies, places, and ideas gradually stick together into aggregates" (Sekimoto & Brown, 2020, p. 137), rather than through a grid of pre-established identity categories. The "stickiness of racial segregation" (Saldanha, 2006, p. 10) and the tendency for "white bodies to stick and exclude others" (Saldanha, 2007, p. 50) while shifting in nature, has become fixed in settler colonial societies. The clustering of white people around space, place, property, and privilege through generations of laws, policies, and practices marks and codes spaces and cultural practices as

white (Sekimoto & Brown, 2020), with whiteness being the unquestioned norm to which everything else is the other.

Alongside the COVID-19 pandemic, recent events such as the shooting of Eishia Hudson, a young Indigenous woman shot by police over liquor store robberies (Palmater, 2020), or the death of a Joyce Echaquan, an Atikamekw woman who died in a Quebec hospital while staff mutter racist comments (Kestler-D'Amours, 2020), have further exposed the racial fault lines in Canadian society. The have laid bare the inequities facing BIPOC in the settler colonial context. Indigenous participants in this project made explicit the connections between their individual experiences of racism and its systemic and structural roots. However, this is not always the case. Red River Métis scholar Jacqueline Romanow (2020) notes that often times Indigenous individuals are acutely aware of the racism and discrimination they experience, without recognition of its root causes. Moreover, large segments of society continue to deny and dismiss race and racial difference, and thus, fail to acknowledge racism (Henry, Rees, & Tator, 2010). As such, the very frank and open discussions of race and racial difference, as well as issues of racism, privilege, and white supremacy among many of the participants in this project is not likely to be reflective of broader society. As one participant noted, it is the “elephant in the room.” The tendency to reduce racism as an individual act of hatred may play a contributing factor. In a podcast, British author Zadie Smith (2020) advocates for a framing of racism as racial contempt rather than the emphasis in the public domain on hatred:

> Racial contempt is a virus. It’s too easy for people to say they don’t feel hatred….people will deny it, with shock. Hate is not the right word, contempt is. And contempt is far more dangerous. Hatred is easy to spot and obvious. Contempt is sunk throughout

> systems and truly not believing in a fundamental level that the person in front of you is not a person as you are. And that is far more dangerous and widespread…. It is much harder for us to not implicate ourselves in.

The tendency to dismiss, deny, or downplay racism and white privilege (Balkissoon & Sung, 2020; Henry, 2017; Scott, 2018) acts in tandem with the favouring of a more colour-blind approach (Scott, 2018). Indeed, the mythology of "racelessness" has been described as the hallmark of Canadian identity (Lund & Carr, 2015). "White fragility" to refer to the emotional, and defensive reaction that many white people have when it comes to discussions of not only racism, but often just the acknowledgement of race (DiAngelo, 2018). This notion of fragility has been applied to the settler colonial context – and specified as "setter fragility" which Colville Confederated Tribes scholar Dina Gilio-Whitaker (2018a) defined as an even more covert form of fragility. Settler fragility stems from white supremacy and is characterized by the inability of settlers to talk about the "privileges of living on lands that were taken in the name of democracy through profound violence and injustice" (Gilio-Whitaker, 2018a, 2018b).

Alongside this fragility – white and settler – is a tendency for "racial amnesia" in the Canadian context – the persistent denial of the long history of racism in this country (Razack, 2002, p. 1). In similar vein and highlighting the interlocking nature of foundations of oppression, Black feminist scholar bell hooks (1992) highlights the ways in which forgetfulness and denial are actively encouraged within white supremacist capitalist patriarchy (pp. 175-178). To acknowledge the deep history of racism and genocide on which Canada was built, would be to challenge celebratory narratives of nationhood, and of Canadians as peacekeepers, as tolerant, and as multicultural (Mackey, 2005, p. 15; Razack, 2002; Regan, 2010, pp. 61-67; Simpson,

James, & Mack, 2011, p. 287). Instead, dominant narratives present racism in the Canadian settler colonial context as the anomaly, and a country without "systemic deep roots" of racism, particularly in comparison to the US, as recently claimed by Ontario Premier Doug Ford (The Canadian Press, 2020). It is for this reason that most Indigenous participants in the project shared their micro level experiences of racial discrimination, often with a caveat such as "I don't want to reduce this to…" and instead reference the need to address racism in our systems, our institutions, our policies, and laws.

The engrained, yet obvious nature of racism was a source of frustration for many participants, particularly Indigenous participants, who described the added burden of having to repeatedly explain the impacts of race to the wider, mainstream (and specifically white settler) society. The quote of Black American novelist Toni Morrison (1975) taken from a panel discussion at Portland State University has resonance:

> The function, the very serious function of racism is distraction. It keeps you from doing your work. It keeps you explaining, over and over again, your reason for being. Somebody says you have no language and you spend twenty years proving that you do. Somebody says your head isn't shaped properly so you have scientists working on the fact that it is. Somebody says you have no art, so you dredge that up. Somebody says you have no kingdoms, so you dredge that up. None of this is necessary. There will always be one more thing.

In similar vein to Canada's racial amnesia, a colonial amnesia is also evident. As recently as 2009, then Prime Minister of Canada Stephen Harper announced at a meeting of the G20, that "we have no history of colonialism" (Assembly of First Nations of Quebec and Labrador,

2009). This common trope of Canada being exempt from colonialism in a historical sense remains popular among many segments of Canadian society, however this sentiment was challenged by all of the participants in this project who were vocal in their assertion that Canada must acknowledge its colonial past. The present-day operation of settler colonialism and its structures of oppression however was not countered by all participants.

While all Indigenous participants expressed views that would align with an intimate understanding of settler colonialism and recognition that its operation of in Canada is current and ongoing, permeating all aspects of society, at various levels of analysis, the same cannot be said for all settler participants. Instead, settler narratives in this project pointed to a common pattern in the Canadian context – namely the "curious double vision" described by Battell Lowman and Barker (2015). This double vision describes a context wherein there is some willingness among settler society to admit to the historic colonization of Canada accompanied by a simultaneous inability, or refusal, to see the ways in which settler colonialism and its inherent violence continues today, targeting Indigenous communities and working "to define the lives of Canadians" (Battell Lowman & Barker, 2015, p. 3).

This inability or refusal to see the contemporary operation of settler colonialism at the micro level is linked in part to the work of the settler state to legitimize its position, while also working to invisibilize settler colonial structures of oppression. Structures of settler colonialism operate in a fashion that persistently attempts to supersede and extinguish the conditions of its operation, so that the settler colony can appear as post-colonial, and as participants in this project mentioned, so that the structures themselves come to be seen as natural and undetectable, and thus unquestioned.

Settler colonialism implicates and brings into its fold settler and Indigenous populations in very different ways (Lawrence & Dua, 2005; Veracini, 2011; Wolfe, 2006), with an unequal distribution of the harms and privileges among these different identity groups (Sylvestre et al., 2019). The narratives from participants mirrored the sentiment of TRC Commissioner Marie Wilson, cited in the introductory chapter, who stated "after 150 years of official co-habitation, we still live so much of our live in separate rooms, separate realities" (cited in Vowel, 2016, back cover). Identity, as a social construct created by and through human interactions, and contingent on history, proximity, and relations to land and resources (Rotz, 2017), was a key issue for all participants in this study – both Indigenous and settler. Participants highlighted the ways in which their identities are formed, experienced, and enacted in the context of settler colonialism. All of the settler participants in this project accepted the settler label, and used it in a descriptive sense to describe a set of behaviors, their structural location, and their identity. This is a key point in differentiating this select group of participants from mainstream settlers in the Canadian context, many of whom eschew the settler identity (Battell Lowman & Barker, 2015, p. 2; Tuck & Yang, 2012, p. 12).

The collective narratives of settler participants highlight the shared settler imaginary, namely how settlers conceptualize their own position in society vis-à-vis other social groups, as well as the normative and ideological assumptions that guide those expectations. As described by settler participants in this project, the settler imaginary is characterized by myths and stories related to who settlers are and the hardships they have endured, narratives of peaceful settlement of the land, and narratives relating to the Indigenous Other (Bertram, 2011; King, 2003; Lovell, 2007; Regan, 2010; Rice & Snyder, 2012; Rotz, 2017; Saul, 2009).

As outlined in the narratives of Indigenous participants in this project, the violence inherent in settler colonialism, including but not limited to the IRSS, the child welfare system, anti-Indigenous racism, white supremacy, and the persistence of socioeconomic and political inequities has had a profound impact on the identity of Indigenous peoples. Indigenous participants shared that what it meant to be Indigenous had been ruptured, resulting from the operation of settler colonialism in Canada. Settler colonial processes have disrupted the worldview and identities of Indigenous communities and the articulation of the relationship between those communities and the land (Tuck & Yang, 2012, p. 6). When combined with other settler colonial processes such as dispossession from the land, as well as the various acts of identity classification and legislation (outlined in Chapter 2), the result has been a profound impact on the survival of Indigenous peoples resulting in what Lawrence (2010) has described as its greatest legacy – fragmentation (p. 508). Fragmentation was key in the narratives presented by Indigenous participants at the individual, familial and community levels.

Settler participants explained that spatial distance between themselves and Indigenous peoples reinforced feelings that they lived in different social worlds, which was often manufactured and crystallized by the policies of the state. This spatial and social distance was cited as contributing at least in part, to a failure to equip settlers with the interactions necessary through which they could begin to bridge those different social worlds. This same notion of distance however was not referenced in the interviews with Indigenous peoples. This perhaps reflects notions of power and domination – the lack of control Indigenous peoples have in the context of settler colonial domination over the physical spaces they occupy (i.e., the establishment of the reserve system and the prolonged restriction of movement), the

fragmentation of Indigenous identities, and the imbalance in symbolic power, namely those unconscious modes of social domination occurring in everyday society (Bourdieu, 1989) that privilege settler society, further contributing to the invisibility and otherness of Indigenous peoples (Donald, 2009, 2012).

Settler participants acknowledged that even in cases where spatial distance was not a limiting factor either in proximity to Indigenous peoples, or to structures of settler colonialism (i.e., Residential Schools), a social distance prevailed. In this way, socio-symbolic distance – a perceived difference between themselves and the Other with reference to identity, lived experience, ideologies, customs and culture, and beliefs was key (Rotz, 2017). The impact of proximity and of socio-symbolic distance however cannot be essentialized or reduced to simply to spatial considerations – it requires an understanding of the ways various axes of difference such as social class, race, and gender, intersect and interact to reproduce the spatial distance (Rotz, 2017).

While the initial dispossession of Indigenous peoples from the land relied on the exertion of physical power and violence, as referenced above, the ongoing legitimation and maintenance of settler colonialism relies on the enduring deployment of both organizational tools and ideological strategies to sustain and maintain its permanence (Harris, 2004; Rotz, 2017). One such tool has been the othering of Indigenous peoples (Coulthard, 2014) which reinforces and builds upon spatial and socio-symbolic distance to limit the production of counter-narratives. Said (1979) notes that western myths about the Other are supported by "institutions, vocabulary, scholarship, imagery, doctrines, even colonial bureaucracies and styles" (p. 2). Participants in this project reflected on the ways in which narratives of and about

the Other (Brons, 2015; Regan, 2010; Said, 1979), of "single stories" (Adichie, 2009), of destructive stories (Senehi, 2009) – are created by settler society, maintained through interactions with family and social networks (which were for the majority of participants, single-identity social groups), in the media, and in educational settings. These single stories of Indigenous lives, cultures, experiences, and histories were reductionistic and resulted in the perpetuation of stereotypes of Indigenous peoples in their individual lives and in society. They are also destructive – reflecting asymmetrical power relationships, and characterized by dishonesty, lack of recognition, exclusionary practices and lack of awareness (Senehi, 2002).

History that is written from a national point of view, and in the colonial and settler colonial contexts, the accepted and disseminated history is written from the point of view of the colonizers (Memmi, 1991). There is a need to acknowledge that in the Canadian settler colonial context "the history of Canada…has been written mainly by English-speaking Euro-Canadians, specifically of British/French ancestry (Frideres & Gadacz, 2008, p. 12)." Different perspectives, namely Indigenous perspectives, are either discredited or excluded completely (Hart & Rowe, 2014). Indigenous counter-narratives are vehemently denied (Alfred, 2010). The education system is one such site that transmits direct and indirect knowledge related to our history; however, that knowledge is interpreted through ideological lenses that permits preferred meanings and understandings.

Schools bolster white supremacy – they reflect the racial ideologies of a broader society, while at the same time are themselves race-making institutions (Jansen, 2009). Schools also serve as a site of upholding settler colonial structures and processes through myths, stories, and narratives of who the Other is through their curriculum. Curriculum in this way must be

considered not as a means of knowledge transmission, but rather as an institution – is it not only the text inscribed in the course syllabus but an understanding of knowledge encoded in dominant beliefs, values, and behaviours, deeply embedded in all aspects of institutional life (Jansen, 2009; Kim-Cragg, 2019). Participants in this project recalled their own educational experience and examples of both a null and whitewashed curriculum, both explicit and implicit, that downplayed and minimized the violence wrought through settler colonial processes (Carr, 2008, 2016; Castagno, 2008; Kim-Cragg, 2019; Korteweg & Fiddler, 2018; Lund & Carr, 2010; Nicoll, 2004; Rivière, 2008; Schick, 2000). Participants directly linked their educational experiences – of a colonial education, of a whitewashed and null curriculum – as contributing to their lack of understanding of Indigenous and settler relations in the Canadian context and feelings of settler ignorance. Participants acknowledged the changing nature of the curriculum to reflect an acknowledgement of the harms enacted on Indigenous peoples as a result of settler colonialism owing to the work of Indigenous activists, Elders, and scholars, the TRC, as well as a changing national consciousness, but added that the remnants of this curriculum remain in place even today. This will be explored further in Chapters 7 and 8.

For as long as Indigenous peoples in Canada have experienced dispossession and oppression at the hands of the settler colonial state and its structures, so too have they organized to resist the state. Yet that resistance and resurgence by Indigenous peoples is often interpreted through a white gaze, and met with white resentment (Schick, 2014) or white backlash (Proulx, 2018).

There is potential to disrupt these convenient stories and processes of othering when as a first step settlers embark on a reflective and reflexive process of unsettling – of relinquishing

myths, acknowledging harms, and exploring complicity. Settler participants in this project shared stories of moments that they felt reflected moments of change in the settler colonial landscape, however for many of these settlers these turning points, or moments of consciousness raising (Mussell, 2008) operated within the confines of the settler colonial state. As such, we must exercise caution in consideration of their potential contribute to a transformative process. Such state-based, top-down turning points mentioned by participants may mark at least the beginning of a process of unsettling – of a loosening or agitating in order to "risk interacting with Indigenous peoples differently…and a willingness to stay in the decolonizing struggle of our own discomfort" (Regan, 2010, p. 13), yet, the turning points referenced were such that they reflected moments (i.e., an apology) and actions (i.e., the release of the Calls to Action) that had been legitimized by the settler state.

This transformative opportunity, and potential for change, could be accentuated, if rather than focusing on state-based initiatives, settlers saw the benefits to society that can come from the resistance and resurgence of Indigenous peoples, and from the respect of Indigenous ways of knowing and being in the world (Nagy, 2020; Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015a, pp. 11-12). As such, there is a unique opportunity for educational institutions (to be explored in Chapter 7). It would also require that settlers let go of the analytical trope of the "white worrier" (Hage, 2003) concerned about their own diminished privilege that may come from Indigenous rights; and white resentment mobilized around arguments of how much 'we' have done for 'them' (Lund & Carr, 2010). It would require challenging national narratives and imaginaries that positions and privileges settlers. Instead, it would reframe Indigenous resurgence as an opportunity for settler society to repair past

relationships and forge equitable and just relationships moving forward – to enact reconciliation.

Summary

This chapter documents how participants conceptualized the relations between settlers and Indigenous peoples. The findings demonstrate that white supremacy remains firmly entrenched in settler society, the result of which is stark socioeconomic and political inequities, asymmetrical power relations, structural racism, discrimination, and white privilege. Settler colonialism and this racial formation has impacted the identities (albeit fluid and malleable) of both settlers and Indigenous peoples in different ways. Narratives of participants highlight their feelings that they occupy different social worlds that is exacerbated by socio-cultural and spatial distance. These differences and distances, real and imagined, affects Indigenous peoples and settlers in profoundly different ways, across time and place, and is manufactured and crystallized through stories, myths, societal norms, and ideologies (Coulthard, 2014; Hinton, 2005; Lawrence, 2010; Regan, 2010).

Chapter 6. Findings Part 2: Truth and Reconciliation

> I was watching the closing of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and I felt angry, not reconciled. While some incredible work came out of the TRC and some Survivors found solace in it, the Canadian government was not honourable and forthcoming in the TRC process, and it felt manipulative to me. It felt like this was a process to neutralize Indigenous anger without talking about returning land, sharing power, and decolonizing Canada. Canada tried to assimilate Indigenous peoples, mistakes were made, it didn't work. I am still here.
>
> - Leanne Betasamosake Simpson (2019)

Introduction

After gaining an understanding of research participants' views on settler colonialism in Canada and its impact on their everyday life, I asked participants to share their views on reconciliation. In the chapter that follows, I will present the findings as they relate to these discussions, including the following themes: i) The Reconciliation Knot; ii) The Truths Told at the TRC; and iii) "It's Not What It Is, It's What It Isn't." The presentation of these themes will be followed by a discussion of the findings.

The Reconciliation Knot

This theme highlights participants' depictions of reconciliation as untangling a knot. An Indigenous participant, who had been doodling on the back of her consent form, likened reconciliation to the process of unravelling a "knot… and you have to begin to pull apart, piece by piece, all these threads that are matted. It's painstaking. Where do you start?" She tapped her pen on the page and passed the following to me:

Figure 3. The Reconciliation Knot

Participants spoke in-depth about the complexity of reconciliation. Participants acknowledged its ever-changing, yet unending nature. A settler participant shared:

> I think that reconciliation means so many different things to so many different people dependent upon their story. I think that there is an umbrella and there are terms that flow from this umbrella and you capture and hold on to the ones that speak to you and where you are in your walk through this journey. So mine may shift from where I am right now. So that's why I am trying to build relationships and having those conversations or just talking and so for me that's where I am. It [conceptualization of reconciliation] may evolve into something else.

The majority of participants emphasized reconciliation as a process, rather than an outcome, highlighting it as a "journey." They described the "hard work" and "labour" that was involved in "walking down that path," though in these descriptions they gave no specific indication of who was to be doing that labour, or what that labour involved. A settler participant described the unending and complex nature of reconciliation through her personal story. For this participant,

she had come to learn more about what reconciliation meant at the societal level through her own personal experience with the passing of a family member with whom she had had a difficult relationship, but whom had tried to make amends before they passed:

> Like even though [relative] died, I think the reconciliation process is still going on for family members… Reconciliation is still this thing that is ongoing and I am trying to, but I feel that my [relative's] life and death and ongoing legacy is helping to give me a new lens on what reconciliation and the TRC means. And how challenging that work is. Like if this is one person, in one family, how do you do that when this is global really. And, how do you do that between people? How do you do that in relation to the land? You know there are more levels to it than just our family? But it makes me see how complex it is.

In recognizing that settler colonialism permeates all aspects of society, participants reinforced the idea that reconciliation had to operate at various levels in society. The process through which reconciliation may operate at these various levels suggested a nested approach. An Indigenous participant described the process of reconciliation as a "web, with me, right there in the middle." Another Indigenous participant echoed this emphasis on a web and the individual as a starting point of any reconciliation process:

> I think it has to start within each individual…. the whole thing around identity has been a journey in my own reconciliation. It's an inside job [laughing] and then it expands outwards… so here I am reconciling my own individual story right now, and taking that to the larger circle of reconciliation, whatever that means, in the larger circle around us.

As seen in the anecdotes above, the use of metaphors was common in the interview narratives, as participants attempted to capture the complexity of reconciliation in the context

of harm (historic and contemporary) and power inequities. Some participants used metaphors of nature and of land – describing reconciliation as "planting new seeds" and attempting to address "roots that had been poisoned." Others referenced reconciliation as a way to deal with the "ghosts of our past" with warnings that Canadian society will continue to be "haunted" by those harms unless there is an active acknowledgement of those ghosts. Of those participants using metaphors, most participants used medical analogies, speaking about reconciliation as a means for "mending" and "healing wounds" and trying to find a "remedy" to the challenges of settler colonialism.

The Truths Told at the TRC

For many of the participants, the TRC as an institution was symbolic of reconciliation and conversations invariably turned to the work of the Commission. All participants acknowledged the instrumental role of the TRC in highlighting the need for reconciliation in the Canadian setting, and saw it as an important and necessary starting point. An Indigenous participant reflected on the work of the Commission as "making public what so many of our communities have been saying for a long time, that wrong has been done at the hands of the Canadian government and that this needs to be addressed, redressed, whatever [sigh] both." A settler participant described the role of the TRC as "confronting and saying out loud what has been done by the government and churches… and that's really important… to talk about the policies that caused harm to Indigenous families." Similarly, an Indigenous participant shared the importance of the role of the TRC in making visible the "very tangible impacts of Residential Schools…that would have been eye-opening for many Canadians." She went on to state:

> I think for a lot of white people in this country; well I should clarify that and say those who were listening right. But the TRC was maybe the first time they heard, and I mean really heard first-hand what the [Residential] Schools did to people. And that could have been people their age. Like if you think of it, say someone in their sixties seeing a Survivor in that age range share and just maybe realizing that hey we lived in the same society and look how different our lives were. So maybe that was the, like this major contribution of TRC to Canada, to white people, like they could see just a different version of society, the one that we as Indians have always seen.

Many of the participants embraced the work of the TRC and the theme of reconciliation not only in their professional life, but also in the personal life. The TRC was cited as providing participants with a common language that was particularly useful in the workplace, through which they could "resist some of the commonplace kind of ways of doing things. I will reference it [the TRC and the Calls to Action]. I think it just helps to ground what we are doing and making sure it is purposeful" (settler participant). Another settler participant shared that they try to centre the TRC's Calls to Action as a means of "holding myself accountable in a small way."

The impact of the TRC and its use of language (i.e., the language used to describe harm, language used in its reports and outreach activities) was apparent in how many of the participants' conceptualized the role of the TRC and its approach to reconciliation. For instance, when asked what reconciliation meant to them, almost every participant mentioned a definition of sorts that was very similar to the TRC which defines reconciliation as an ongoing process of "establishing and maintaining a mutually respectful relationship between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples" (2015c, p. 6). Participants spoke almost by rote, of the importance

of relationships between Indigenous and settler communities –of forging new relationships, of fostering collaboration, with an indication of a sort of shared identity. They referred to "building relationships," of "working together", "sharing a common future" and about the "togetherness of Indigenous and non-Indigenous people." A settler participant shared that after considering the work of the TRC, she had come to see reconciliation as:

> Well I think it is about acknowledging first off you know our past and you know understanding what colonization has done to our country and the trauma that continues because of it. And then with that knowledge it is hopefully understanding and building relations with Indigenous people to understand their story and to help support them to re-find their culture and their language. And to stand alongside them. Yeah. It's about building those relationships that unfortunately we have damaged.

Another settler participant, who repeatedly used the possessive pronoun of *our* when referring to Indigenous peoples in the Canadian context shared a similar sentiment:

> I think hopefully the common theme [of reconciliation] is the togetherness of Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples learning from one another and moving forward together, I think that is more of a common theme. Like it can't be in isolation. It can't be just our Indigenous population doing it alone. It's not just us obviously controlling and doing it, it has to be done in cooperation and understanding together, if we are moving forward.

Many participants, particularly Indigenous participants, commented on the importance of the TRC for providing a platform through which Indigenous peoples could have their stories heard and their experiences acknowledged. For one Indigenous participant, the TRC "was the

first time my [relative] spoke publicly about what had happened to them." She later shared that while this had been difficult for her family, it also "helped them make sense of what they went through and finally be able to face it with some dignity. And it gave [family members] at least a bit of understanding for the way things were." Another Indigenous participant, who admittedly "wavered on it [TRC] at the beginning," explained that by "centring *our* [emphasis by participant] voices and Survivors" she became more attuned to its potential "for healing and empowerment." During these conversations, Indigenous participants often used reconciliation (or reconcile) interchangeably with healing.

Participants, settlers and Indigenous alike, also cited the leadership of then Justice, now Senator Murray Sinclair, Dr. Marie Wilson, and Chief Wilton Littlechild as being key to the success of the TRC.

"It's Not What It Is, It's What It Isn't"

Despite the many strengths identified by participants of the TRC, there were also important criticisms levelled against it, and reconciliation more generally speaking. Most Indigenous participants expressed that they had a great deal of hesitancy and cynicism around the creation of the TRC, seeing it as an instrument of the state (this same critique was not levelled by setter participants, though it would be problematic to assume that settlers did not share this critique). An Indigenous participant explained:

> There were whisperings of a truth commission for a while, so when it was formally announced, it wasn't something that I personally thought about as great cause for celebration. And I just couldn't imagine like what that would look like. [Long pause]. To

> be honest, I actually just thought it was for show, for their [federal government's] image.

Other Indigenous participants reinforced the role of the state in the TRC's formation, explaining that they felt it was important to consider the political context around which it was created. Another Indigenous participant stated that she believed the TRC was a means to placate the mounting public pressure to address and acknowledge the harms of the residential school system, referring to the TRC as the "least possible they [government] could do given the [public] pressure on them."

Participants also related the state-based nature of the TRC to the types of truths heard and acknowledged. Participants were unanimous in commenting that reconciliation has as a precondition both awareness and acknowledgement (similar to the TRC). However, awareness and acknowledgement of what – became a focal point for a number of participants. An Indigenous participant shared:

> I mean we are doing better. There's changes, things are improving. But like what are we acknowledging. We can talk about Residential Schools and don't get me wrong, we should be doing that. But that's just one part of it. A big part, yes, but one part. And my fear is that talking about Residential Schools is almost being done in a way that it's not politicized. I don't even know if that's the right word. Like it's presented as this you know blip in our history 'cause [*sic*] that's what the government says we should talk about.

Participants were acutely aware of the challenge of working towards reconciliation when there are such varied understandings of what reconciliation means. Throughout each of the

interviews as participants shared their views and talked more about the subject, it became clear that for many participants, it was not necessarily about what reconciliation is (i.e., positive relationships between Indigenous and settlers) but rather what it isn't, citing the persistence of socioeconomic inequities, anti-Indigenous racism, and the suppression of Indigenous worldviews and identities. An Indigenous participant summed it up:

> I don't know what reconciliation is anymore, but I sure as hell can tell you what it isn't. It isn't the poverty rates we have in this province. It isn't the number of Indigenous kids in care. It isn't the [Indigenous] kids that are ignored in classrooms. It isn't Missing and Murdered Aboriginal Women. It isn't the racism that I've heard my [Indigenous] friends be subject to. [Long pause]. I mean we still have to work towards it though, right. Because what's the alternative. Maybe that's what it is [Laughing]. It's the work.

Similarly, a settler participant who had for many years worked in the inner city before moving to a more suburban school division, staffed primarily by settlers and students from a higher socioeconomic demographic, shared her concerns:

> You know, with all this [reconciliation] talk sometimes I feel like a hypocrite. So on the one hand, I am really committed to this idea of reconciliation here. And to teaching it to my kids [students] right. And my idea of reconciliation is not better than my colleagues, or I guess I'm not better than the next person I mean. But in reality, the places that the kids are coming from in my classroom is so unequal. And their starting place in terms of knowing, but also in terms of just the privileges and I'm generalizing here, but really they are privileged, from higher socioeconomic status, and also primarily white Canadians. And so I start to think like who is the audience for these lessons and what

> are they bringing to the table but also what will they do with this knowledge? And sometimes I'm really hopeful, but there's other days where I feel much less so.

An Indigenous participant asked rhetorically, "I can't stop thinking though is acknowledgement enough in the face of ongoing dispossession. Like it's [dispossession] still happening." Highlighting these potentially contradictory processes, a settler participant pondered "reconciliation in Canada – it's a bit of an oxymoron really." Importantly, for most participants the emphasis was on not only acknowledgement and truth, but rather on seeing reconciliation as dismantling colonial systems that have been the source of harm (historic and cotemporary). She commented: "you know reconciliation is not only talking about the past, but it is about what can we as a society do to undo the damage and to make sure that this doesn't keep happening right."

Most participants were in agreement that in recent years, the TRC had succeeded in raising awareness and acknowledging the harms that resulted from the IRSS. However, as one Indigenous participant shared, the notion of recognizing the converse – the ways in which settlers have been privileged through that same system, required much more work. And for this participant, they were cynical as to whether this would be acknowledged in the foreseeable future:

> Well you know, I've been to the conferences and you can see, it's slow, but you do see the heads nodding more, the recognition of everything that's been done to us. But it's still being seen as a thing of the past. And I know people will disagree with me here. But there's more to the story. So much more. And maybe that's the more damaging part because the privileges that non-Indigenous peoples have received time and time again,

at the hands of this system, these systems, well that's not being acknowledged yet. And that seems to be harder for Canadians to wrap their heads around.

A white-presenting Indigenous participant summarized the challenges that exist in working towards reconciliation when the systems that cause that initial harm remain firmly in place:

I believe that if we are on the path to reconciliation, because I don't think it's ever going to be-, it's a path that has to continue. It's not something that has an end date. But I believe we have received true reconciliation when somebody like Wab Kinew runs and it's not turned into a race war. We have achieved true reconciliation when I can walk into a store with [Indigenous friend] and I walk into a store and people don't follow her. We have reconciliation when you know Canadians understand and acknowledge what the truth of our past history was and then say hey you know what that's bullshit. It's when you quit race and the bias and everything. That to me is reconciliation. But importantly it is when all Canadians know and accept their part in what happened. So you know, when people don't get offended when they hear the term white privilege. I have never not gotten a job because of my skin colour, you know…. You know, I look around at the shop we are in and I could guarantee you that if, there's probably 50% of these people… would probably have an extremely negative view of First Nations people. Yeah, yeah, I heard about the Residential Schools, but they need to get over it. What Murray Sinclair had said, you know we don't just get over it. When people quit saying that, that's when we have reconciliation. But we're not even close.

Working towards reconciliation in the context of contemporary harm had resulted in many participants growing weary of the reconciliation discourse. A settler participant who worked in the inner city, with primarily settler colleagues shared the following:

> Well I almost don't like the word anymore. I am having some issues around that term because I think it has come to mean something that is totally different for different people. I think for Indigenous communities it is not working hard enough for them. It is working more for kind of the settler community, maybe-, as like a feel-good thing. I am part of some projects now that look at reconciliation, but look more at resurgence and in a different way.

The question of who, and exactly what, needs to be reconciled became key and was reiterated by an Indigenous participant who shared her own concerns with the reconciliation narrative and, in particular, claims to work towards reconciliation when prevailing attitudes in society also repeatedly state that Indigenous communities need to "get over it":

> That's a big question [what is reconciliation]. I would say the answer to that question is fairly complex. And I think that although Indigenous people are playing a large role in reconciliation, I don't believe we have anything to reconcile. I believe the rest of Canada has something they need to reconcile with us, with Indigenous people. By nature of like the strength and resilience and kindness and love in Indigenous people, they are working with others on this journey right. And it is as a result of many of their stories and trauma has been shared that this TRC report has been shared right. And the Calls to Action. And I think that, you know reconciliation to me, when will we have reconciled, when things are equal. And like, maybe equitable is a better word because I don't think

> everybody needs the same thing. Let's say when things are equitable for our kids and our families. And we are not having a conversation about which communities have access to clean drinking water or not. Or which kids at age 14 need to decide whether they want to leave their family and go to high school or not. You know we are not having a conversation about the achievement gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous learners. When everybody can articulate why Indigenous education. You know those would be some of the pieces for me of what that would look like. …And nobody else is saying why don't they just get over it? Like nobody should ever say that. That phrase just goes away. …Right. I say to people we'll get over it when [long pause indicating unanswered question]. You know these are not things that all taken place like a hundred years ago and everything is perfect now. And I think that sometimes people don't understand that part. That it's viewed in this historical context. And sometimes schools perpetuate that.

It became apparent that reconciliation had, as one settler participant suggested "many, many layers." However, despite their critiques of reconciliation as a discourse, participants were also fully committed to improving and forging new, more equitable relations between settlers and Indigenous peoples. Participants acknowledged reconciliation's "continuous," "constant" and "unending" nature: "It's a path that has to continue. It's not something that has an end date." Another participant shared that she recognized that the work necessary for reconciliation was ongoing:

You know, do I think that reconciliation is something that will come to fruition in my lifetime, I don't. You know, do I think it is a worthwhile conversation to be [having], I do. And do I think there's a lot more work left to be done. Absolutely.

Discussion

Themes and Subthemes	Definition
The Reconciliation Knot	
Reconciliation is complex.	There is no universal definition of reconciliation. Different people have different meanings.
Reconciliation operates at different levels.	Reconciliation is iterative and interactive. For many participants, reconciliation starts with the individual.
Metaphors can help make sense of the complexity.	At times, language to describe harm and repair is inadequate. Metaphors help untangle that knot – helping people make sense of difficult pasts.
The Truths Told at the TRC	
TRCs and visibility	The TRC's approach made visible harms committed against Indigenous peoples.
TRCS provide a common language.	TRCs can provide a common language to articulate and understand wrongdoing and importantly to ground work for action.
Centring Indigenous peoples' experiences.	By centring Indigenous people's experiences, TRCs can serve as a space for healing.
"It's Not What It Is, It's What It Isn't."	
The TRCs as instrument of state	The formation of TRCs often reflect a notion of compromise by the state.
"Reconciliation isn't working hard enough."	The persistence of socio-economic inequities dampens reconciliation efforts.
Reconciliation in a settler colonial society is an "oxymoron."	Reconciliation cannot truly take place in the context of contemporary dispossession.

Table 3. Truth and Reconciliation in Canada: Summary of themes and subthemes

Within the transitional justice discourse, reconciliation is perhaps one of the most contested concepts (Borer, 2006; Hughes & Kostovicova, 2018; Skaar, 2013; Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015a; Villa-Vicencio, 2006; Wyile, 2017). Discussions

with participants in this project accentuated the complexity of reconciliation and highlighted its varied meanings and understandings. The aim of asking participants to share what reconciliation meant to them was not an attempt to achieve any sort of universal definition of reconciliation, but rather to tease out its contested nature, so as to understand the possibilities, limits, and challenges towards working (and teaching) towards reconciliation in the context of ongoing settler colonialism.

The TRC, in a similar vein to other truth commissions throughout the world (Llewellyn, 2006) defines reconciliation is "an ongoing process of establishing and maintain respectful relationships" (2015a, pp. 11-17; 2015c, p. 16) and then goes on to state the importance of revitalizing Indigenous traditions and worldviews as a crucial part of the reconciliation process:

> A critical part of this process involves repairing damaged trust by making apologies, providing individual and collective reparations and following through with concrete actions that demonstrate real societal change. Establishing respectful relationships also requires the revitalization of Indigenous law and legal traditions. It is important that all Canadians understand how traditional First Nations, Inuit, and Métis approaches to resolving conflict, repairing harm, and restoring relationships can inform the reconciliation process (pp. 16-17).

Participants in this project echoed this emphasis on rebuilding relationships and forging a national identity that was focused on togetherness. However, it is critical to consider to what extent there are/were peaceful and equitable relationships between settlers and Indigenous to which we can return (Jung, 2018; Talaga, 2020).

An understanding of reconciliation not as an end goal, but rather as a process (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015c; Villa-Vicencio, 2006), through which society works to untangle threads that have knotted, was suggested by a participant. This process-based analogy resonated with the narratives of other participants. This process-based understanding of reconciliations implies that it is ever-changing and unending. By focusing on reconciliation as a process, there at least presents an opportunity to deal with the complex issues that continue to undermine the cultivation of an enduring peace (Villa-Vicencio, 2006, pp. 67-73) that participants also identified and that will be explored later in this chapter.

Depicting reconciliation as a knot with many matted threads to be undone, or as a web of connections, emphasizes the importance of reconciliation operating at various levels in society (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015a). The recognition of reconciliation as operating at multiple levels of society is well established in the transitional justice literature. It is also reflected in other transitional justice practices and mechanisms such as those aimed at individual, family, and/or community-level reconciliation. Most often, such initiatives have as their emphasis rebuilding community and promoting psychosocial healing at the grassroots level.

For a number of participants in this project, the primary level of reconciliation begins with the individual – who sits firmly in the middle of the web, with reconciliation working its way outwards, on to the family, community, social group, and wider level of society, a sort of trickle-out effect. In this project, both Indigenous participants and settlers referenced the individual as the starting point, the former using reconciliation as a synonym for healing; the latter for reflection and unsettling, though that unsettling process entailed very different things

for different participants. This centrality on the individual perhaps reflects the dominance of western, neoliberal thought. As Herman Michell (2017) of the Barren Lands Cree Nation suggests that rather than focusing on the individual as a starting point, it is important to start with (reconnecting to) land and earth centred in the middle of the web, and then weaving outwards to include first the individual and then families, communities, and society through a series of web-like connections.

Many participants resorted to metaphors and analogies in their interviews describing a reconciliation through a form of likeness to another concept. Metaphors can provide an accessible language for capturing the essence of experiences that are complex (Osmond & O'Connor, 2004, p. 683), such as the contested nature of reconciliation. The framing of issues as metaphors influences the conceptualization of the issues, as well as the solutions, is often unconscious (McGlone, 2007). In this way, metaphors can influence how we act, think, and behave (Thibodeau & Boroditsky, 2011), and thus how we relate to the Other. However, the reliance on metaphors, and specifically on medical metaphor and analogies, in discussing transitional justice mechanisms and notions of reconciliation within both transitional justice and PACS (Leebaw, 2008, p. 96) requires further consideration. Throughout the literature and as reiterated by participants in this project, terms such as "wounds", "healing", "cleansing" are utilized, just to name a few. While these metaphors are not problematic per se, it is important to question the ways in which they are utilized. Reflecting on the continued privileging of positivism particularly in the practice professions (nursing, social work, and perhaps PACS could be included here), it is crucial that the use of medical language is not an attempt to pathologize harm. In work that explores the converse – namely, the use of conflict analogies in medicine,

there are suggestions that metaphors can operate in a way that blurs the lines between literal and figurative, so that patients “fighting a battle” internalize blame if they cannot overcome their illness (Khullar, 2014).

Research suggests that the use of a metaphor to explain complex issues has a powerful influence over how people will attempt to both gain further information about the issue, as well as how they attempt to solve the problem (Thibodeau & Boroditsky, 2011). For instance, an empirical experiment was conducted to understand whether the metaphors used to discuss crime impacted how people understood that crime, and importantly how they proposed solutions to it (Thibodeau & Boroditsky, 2011). For one group, crime was described as a *virus infecting* a community; while for the other group, crime was the *wild beast* preying on the city. Participants within the *virus* frame were more likely to propose solutions involving social reform to address the root causes of the virus; while those in the *beast* frame proposed solutions more in line with enforcement of law and catching crime. None of the participants identified the metaphor use as impacting their proposed solutions (Thibodeau & Boroditsky, 2011, p. 4). It is important to ensure then that the framing of both settler colonialism and reconciliation are not done in a way that pathologizes harm or reduces complex histories and knowledges. Importantly, Tuck and Yang (2012) also remind us of the dangers of metaphorization of decolonization (presented incorrectly as akin to other social justice struggles), in that such an approach works to further maintain or entrench the settler colonial status quo. Given the oppression of language and worldviews and the asymmetrical power relations inherent in settler colonialism, we must also ensure that the metaphors used do not further privilege western, Eurocentric knowledge bases, and worldviews or further entrench colonial hegemony.

Discussing reconciliation in the Canadian context invariably raised the work of the TRC by participants. South African Archbishop and anti-Apartheid activist Desmond Tutu (2000) refers to TRCs as a third way – "a compromise between the extreme of Nuremberg trials and blanket amnesty or national amnesia" (p. 30). It is widely accepted in PACS and transitional justice literature that working towards peace must be in tandem with the acknowledging the past (Borer, 2006, p. 19). TRCs can potentially chart a path between "too much memory and too much forgetting" (Minow, 1998, p. 4). TRCs can potentially operate in such a way that they make harm visible, wrestle with memory and remembering, and acknowledge truth(s) however contested (Avruch, 2010; Borer, 2006; Chapman & Ball, 2001; Gready, 2011; Hayner, 2011; Mamdani, 2000). Participants in this project acknowledged the central role of transitional justice mechanisms such as truth commissions for truth telling and the importance of witnessing and listening to those truths. And overwhelmingly, participants in this project cited the Canadian TRC as a positive starting point.

The TRC's work of truth telling as it related to the IRSS was cited by participants as a key strength, offering an opportunity to (re)story history as it relates to individual experiences in residential schools. It is indeed a responsibility of truth commissions to produce an official record of a history that was/is previously hidden and to provide a platform for voices that were/are deliberately silenced (Nagy, 2012b, p. 351). Writing on the South African experience, Afrikaner poet Antje Krog (2000) expresses, "if the truth is to be believed in this country, it must perhaps be written by those who bear the consequences of the past" (p. 112). TRCs can potentially provide the space with which to re-story history reflecting multiple voices and experiences (Lederach, 2010; Regan, 2010, p. 73).

The Canadian TRC in its very design aimed to promote the voices of Survivors' and their experiential knowledges so that they could produce counter-narratives to the myth of benign colonialism and settler denial so prominent in the Canadian settler colonial context (James, 2012; Nagy, 2020). While Survivors of Residential Schools have done the work of telling and re-telling their stories – of sharing and owning their stories in an effort to raise public education and awareness, the onus is now on government, educators, and on civil society, specifically settlers, to acknowledge and honour these stories into public education efforts. However, as Palmater commented "all levels of government need to put time, energy and resources into massive public education… and they're failing" (cited in Andrew-Gee, 2019).

Participants acknowledged the power of the TRC primarily as a means for providing them a "common language" and understanding through which they could approach issues relating to reconciliation in Canada. However, this common language that they referred to in their narratives was related specifically to the task of rebuilding relationships between Indigenous peoples and settlers, and to Indigenous healing stemming from the abuses of the IRSS and not to wider conversations around Indigenous sovereignty and land. As such, it is important to question whether such "common language" in fact serves to implicate a particular story of the conflict, which results not only in a narrowed discourse for discussing ongoing grievances, but also providing a limited vocabulary through which Indigenous groups can seek redress (Miller, 2008, p. 287). It is crucial that TRCs provide a space through which they can directly challenge and begin to rewrite official state narratives of history and of contemporary society, breaking the pattern of singular knowledge or truth (Arthur, 2012, p. 4; Jansen, 2009).

The TRC embraced a victim-centred approach (Government of Canada, 2006, p. Schedule N) that aimed to foster grassroots processes of rebuilding and was driven by the varied experiences of Survivors. This approach was cited by all participants in the project, particularly Indigenous participants, as a strength of the TRC. This victim-centred approach was often equated with the healing of Survivors, particularly those who told their stories at the TRC. However, the transitional justice literature has outlined a number of challenges with such an approach and as such, we must question the role of a TRC to take on this task. Transitional justice scholars caution that the emphasis on the supposed therapeutic landscape of TRCs can pathologize victims (Green, 2012; Nagy, 2020) and flatten diversity (Moon, 2009). It may also serve to privilege or silence certain narratives such as gender-based violence (DeLaet, 2006; Porter, 2016; Ross, 2010). The gendered nature of contemporary settler colonial oppression (Monture-Angus, 1995; Morgensen, 2013; Razack et al., 2010) and the androcentric nature of the Canadian attempts to deal with the legacy of the IRSS through the TRC and has produced what has been referred to as a "double settler denial" (Grey & James, 2016).

Moreover, writing on the Canadian TRC's victim-centred approach, settler scholar Matt James (2012) refers to it as *carnivalesque* in nature. James was focused not on a critique of the Canadian TRC per se, but rather on larger questions of knowledge production and transmission. He raises concern by oppressed groups in a society "dominated by the institutional perpetrators and individual beneficiaries of the injustices" (James, 2012, p. 3). Here, James questions the goals of truth commissions of transforming societal knowledge and attitudes by establishing itself as a space for Survivors to share traumatic experiences. As settler philosopher Anna Cook (2017) reminds us, there is need to "complicate the assumption that non-Native

Canadians simply need to hear testimonies of residential school Survivors in order to challenge their historical amnesia" (p. 80). Moreover, at an individual level, the extent to which individuals have to share their trauma and pain through a truth commission, the (settler) gaze that is upon them, and the potential for opening up themselves (and families) through their testimony to accusations of non-credibility can cause considerable damage (Henry, 2010; Nagy, 2020). Eugene Arcand, chair of the governing circle of the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation, and Survivor of the IRSS shared:

> I'm a Survivor of Canada's residential school system. I wasn't called by my name; the ID number my school gave me was 781. I spent 11 years of my childhood at church-run schools in Saskatchewan. So this back-to-school period is always a particularly rough time; year after year, September was when we were torn away from our families and our homes. For most of our adult lives, we tried to suppress these painful memories. This is common to many residential school Survivors; we didn't talk about what we went through. Not to anyone. For more than 30 years, I didn't even talk to my wife about it. The federal government's apology, the residential schools settlement agreement and the independent assessment process component made us remember, made us remember – over a short period of time – what many of us have spent a lifetime trying to forget. In telling this story, we are not looking for pity. Rather, it's to underline how hard it has been for residential school Survivors to share their stories (2020).

In the wake of continued dispossession and oppression of Indigenous peoples, settler resentment to demands for Indigenous land rights and sovereignty (Coulthard, 2014; Hernandez, 2019; Hiller, 2017; M. Sinclair, 2020), we must consider the ethical nature of asking

Survivors to (re)share their stories and (re)live their pain under a settler gaze and declining settler support for reconciliation and policies that would improve the lives of Indigenous peoples (Andrew-Gee, 2019; Environics Institute for Survey Research, 2016, 2020).

Despite the strengths of the TRC and its role as a starting point on the path of reconciliation, as alluded to thus far in the discussion, there were a number of critiques raised on the TRC specifically, and of the reconciliation discourse more broadly speaking. Repeatedly in the interviews, the role of the TRC as an instrument of the state was cited, particularly by Indigenous participants, as cause for concern. Transitional justice mechanisms always include a set of compromises and concessions, and TRCs are emblematic of the notions of compromise that are endemic to transitional justice (Avruch, 2010, p. 36; Gready, 2011, p. 1). The Canadian TRC is no exception to this notion of compromise. The operation of the TRC as victim-centred, providing a space to acknowledge victims and provide redress becomes complicated by its implication in liberal state-building, where victims become an essential piece of prescribed mechanisms (Robins, 2017). The implementation of TRCs in countries recovering from conflict have often been used to denote a break with an old regime, and symbolic of steps towards a new political context (Chapman & van der Merwe, 2008; Jung, 2018; Nagy, 2008). In this way, TRCs and other transitional justice mechanisms (i.e., apologies, reparations) often serve as a means for "regenerating the social fabric of a nation in the wake of profound injustice" (Jung, 2018, p. 256) with the purpose of (re) establishing the legitimacy of the state and its institutions. It is worth considering to what extent Canadian society was in a state of 'transition' and whether the creation of the TRC was in fact, a break with the past, or rather an opportunity

for the state to reinforce its sovereign authority over Indigenous populations (Coulthard, 2011a, 2011b; Jung, 2014).

As an instrument of the state, with its mandate defined in the context of the IRSSA, the focus on the individual Survivor serves another important limiting factor. By limiting the TRC's frame of reference at the outset to individual rights violations in the context of the IRSS, the ability of the Commission to uncover and document the totality of the residential school experience and its connections to settler colonialism is inevitably challenged. Injustices suffered as a result of the IRSS must be located within the context of settler colonialism, and with attention to access and relationships with land, territory, and other living beings, as well as economic rights, and the right to practice language, ritual, and spirituality. Through its mandate, the Canadian TRC was tasked with documenting specifically the injustices of the IRSS, a task that is without question, necessary. However, to reduce settler colonialism only to the abuses experienced through the IRSS necessarily renders any truths derived from the Commission as incomplete and partial and participants, particularly those who identified as Indigenous found this increasingly problematic. As noted by participants in the project, the IRSS is just one node of destruction within the larger settler colonial project (Woolford, 2013). As Bob Watts (cited in Nagy, 2012a) (from the Mohawk and Ojibway Nations), former interim executive director of the TRC asserted, "all of the Survivors of residential schools aren't just residential school Survivors. They're Survivors of failed treaty processes, they're Survivors of frustrated land claims, they're Survivors of inadequate education for their kids and their grandkids, they're Survivors of inadequate housing programs, overcrowding, poor water" (p. 52).

The foregrounding of victims' stories of trauma resulting from the IRSS, serves to individualize and isolate these violations from the overarching dehumanization and oppression of Indigenous peoples that results from settler colonialism obfuscating the role of the state (Nagy, 2020). Individual violation (i.e., physical, sexual, and emotional abuse) may be emphasized in a way that potentially minimizes broader structural harms, and the ways in which those individual harms impact the wider community or social group, which given the emphasis on relationships in Indigenous ontologies and the intergenerational impact of trauma, is pertinent. The centrality of the individual that is so much a part of both transitional justice and the western human rights discourse on which it relies, is disconnected from Indigenous ontologies and epistemologies. It is also contrary to projects of restorative and (re)distributive justice that emphasize community and relationship-centered models and reconciliation that accounts for economic justice (Llewellyn, 2006). Moreover, in a context where there are a large number of beneficiaries of a system of oppression (Mamdani, 1996, 2000) such as settler colonialism, this tendency can absolve those beneficiaries and benefactors from taking responsibility and for seeing their own complicity (Davis et al., 2017; Nagy, 2020).

In attempting to work within the confines of a state-driven approach to what constituted violation, any attempts to go beyond and acknowledge the various forms of violence as a result of settler colonialism becomes the discretion of the Commission. TRCs are also responsible for providing the "contextualized explanation of the causes, nature, extent, impact and legacy of violence" (Nagy, 2012b, p. 351) and fortunately, under the leadership of the commissioners of the TRC, the commission does acknowledge and provides a thorough overview of the "imperial context" and in particular the relationship between colonial empires

and Christian churches, as well as the dispossession and resettling of Indigenous lands that laid the foundation for the development and operation of the Canadian IRSS (2015c). In this way, the Commission's work does acknowledge the interrelations and intersections between the IRSS and other forms of oppression. However, it remains that this structural formation of the oppression is relegated to the background. While settler colonialism operates in everyday ways, it is problematic to assume that it is a normalized background, and to do so serves to re-centre settler experiences and subjectivity (Snelgrove et al., 2014, p. 9). This critique is by no means limited to the Canadian experience. The South African TRC, perhaps one of the most well-known and researched TRCs (Nagy, 2012b), was mandated to investigate and document gross human rights violations committed between the years of 1960 to 1994 (Rigby, 2001, p. 127). However, the Commission had to work with a relatively narrow definition of who constituted a victim and what constituted a human rights violation. In effect, the result was that the violence of Apartheid was misrepresented, focused on the violation of individual civil and political rights (Asmal, 2000). This focus was to the exclusion of Apartheid as a system of racial capitalism that was rooted in the violation of economic, social, and cultural rights of Black and coloured peoples[15] (Bond, 2003, 2004; Chapman & van der Merwe, 2008; Moon, 2008; Terreblanche, 2000, p. 265; van der Merwe, 2002).

The limited mandate of the TRC in terms of the scope of its focus inevitably raises a related issue, and that is the tendency of transitional justice mechanisms to reduce long and complicated histories to a more immediate past of the conflict (Hinton, 2010, p. 7). When compared to other truth commissions, the Canadian TRC explored a relatively extended time

[15] In South Africa, racial categorizations included white, Black, Coloured, and Indian.

frame of more than 100 years. And yet, 100 years does not cover the history of dispossession and oppression faced by Indigenous peoples in Canada with the arrival of Europeans in the sixteenth century. While the temporal limitation is understandable given the practicalities of working with living Survivors and witnesses, such an approach may be inadequate to Indigenous communities to address the long-term experiences of marginalization and the historical abuses suffered by ancestors that remain in the memory and oral traditions of the community (Arthur, 2012, p. 4). This temporal challenge for transitional justice is also rooted in western ontological assumptions of time as unilinear and present-centred (Walker, 2004, p. 529) which stands in stark contrast to a more circular conceptions of time in Indigenous worldviews (Bopp, 1989). Moreover, as Alfred (2009b) suggests, and as demonstrated in Chapter 5, it is these short-sighted views of history that have contributed to the ignorance and willful denial of settler society to address the legacies of settler colonialism (p. 182).

While participants in this project emphasized the importance of building and restoring relationships between settlers and Indigenous peoples as outlined in the TRC, by and large, reconciliation for the majority of participants was equated with addressing structural issues. Throughout the interviews, participants repeatedly cited poverty and impoverishment of Indigenous peoples, unequal access to resources, and continuing socioeconomic inequities as hampering any work towards reconciliation. Again, the failure of TRCs and the reconciliation discourse to contribute to socioeconomic transformation is not unique to the Canadian Setting. Former commissioner of the South African TRC Pumla Gobodo-Madikela commented:

> …while we had this process of dialogue and people telling their stories about the past – transformation did not happen. And it did not happen because that project of

> transformation was not addressed at the level of economic transformation, and economic injustices of the past; because people who were excluded from privileges of the past enter this current period with empty hands, basically (2010).

Structural violence and economic justice must be brought into the transitional justice discourse and practice. Louise Arbour (2007), former United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, asserts that transitional justice must have "the ambition of assisting the transformation of oppressed societies into free ones by addressing the injustices of the past through measures that will procure an equitable future" (p. 2). And yet, to date, transitional justice mechanisms have overwhelmingly focused on the protection and promotion of civil and political rights to the exclusion of economic rights, either by mentioning inequality as a problem but then failing to address it, or by minimizing issues of structural violence in favour of the more visible physical violence (Miller, 2008, p. 273; Muvingi, 2009). The result has been a systemic and systematic marginalization of issues of socioeconomic transformation that could potentially address economic inequality, structural violence, redistribution and development and build a sustainable peace (Miller, 2008, p. 266). By making public the socioeconomic root causes of violence, TRCs can serve to encourage more broad civilian participation in the peace building process, raising awareness to the widespread impact and intergenerational socioeconomic impacts of atrocities and encouraging a sense of informed empathy from the beneficiaries of oppression – the settler majority of those who benefitted from that violent past. By providing a platform for truth-telling based on the violation and abuse of economic and social rights, TRCs can contribute to a more complete picture of the truths of the past, while also providing a safe space for individuals and communities to articulate their needs in the transitional phase. By

emphasizing structural violence and inequalities, TRCs can provide a space for initiatives of both the state and civil society that aim to enhance and promote human security and improve people's livelihoods, thus engaging in "everyday reconciliation" (Duthie, 2008, p. 292). Reconciliation "must move beyond individual abuse to come to mean a collective re-balancing of the playing field" (Simpson, 2011, p. 22).

It should be asked of new transitional justice mechanisms to what extent it makes sense to speak of reconciliation when the circumstances that create continued discontent remain. New cycles of violence, continued patterns of conflict, and deepening structural violence in countries that were celebrated for their transitional justice projects makes the question of the transitional justice discourse and its marginalization of the violation of rights even more pressing. There was an air of hypocrisy noted by participants in this project in that the reconciliation discourse occurred in the context of settler colonialism. It was as one participant stated, an "oxymoron." This critique of reconciliation was particularly relevant as they discussed the ways in which their role as educators in a settler colonial context is one that was fraught with inequities and unequal power relations. Moreover, participants expressed concern about the ways in which the language of reconciliation has been co-opted, and runs the risk of being an empty signifier – meaningless.

While participants in this project expressed concern with the reconciliation discourse, and described a contradictory nature of a reconciliation project within a larger infrastructure of inequity and oppression, they did not reject reconciliation as an avenue for social change. It is crucial however to acknowledge the work of Indigenous activists and scholars who have expressed ambivalence towards reconciliation as a project, yet attempt to work within the

reconciliation discourse, co-opting the language to create conversations that directly engages settler-Indigenous relations (Jung, 2018) and draws attention to contemporary settler colonialism. This includes the work of Indigenous artists, musicians, and writers (Jung, 2018). This also includes attempts at the political level, such as the work of former commissioner Senator Murray Sinclair (FineDay, 2020; York, 2019a) or child welfare activist Cindy Blackstock (2011), member of the Gitxsan First Nation, who attempt to use the language reconciliation to leverage political action by governments, as well as mainstream settler society.

There has also been resistance to, and rejection of, reconciliation in the settler colonial setting. In his work on the Australian context, sociologist and human rights scholar Damien Short (2008) states that reconciliation has placed a "colonial ceiling [on Indigenous aspirations]…by emphasizing nation-building and national unity over sovereignty or the negotiation of a treaty" (p. 162). Similarly, Coulthard (2011a, 2011b) dismisses reconciliation for its reliance on colonial recognition that does little to dismantle colonial structures or return land to Indigenous peoples; rather reconciliation defers (and potentially denies) demands for self-determination by Indigenous peoples (Corntassel & Holder, 2008, p. 467; Johnson, 2011, p. 188). In a Twitter exchange between Michif (Métis) artist Christi Belcourt and Unangaŷ scholar and activist Eve Tuck, it was stated "Reconciliation w/o [*sic*] the return of our land is not even possible. Reconciliation is a rebranding of insidious gov't practices" (2016). Simpson dismisses reconciliation as "window dressing" that is offered instead of tackling root causes of Indigenous oppression – "giving back land, so we can rebuild and recover from the losses of the last four centuries and truly enter into a new relationship with Canada and Canadians" (2016). Given these concerns, and in the context of the invasion of unceded Unist'ot'en territory and arrest of

land defenders, activists have recently claimed reconciliation in Canada to be dead (Talaga, 2020; tawinikay (aka Southern Wind Woman), 2020; Unist'ot'en, 2020). And as Mohawk activist Ellen Gabriel recently stated:

> Reconciliation never truly started. Reconciliation is about reparation and restitution. If we look at what's happening today, the exact opposite is happening… There have been a lot of flowery words by prime ministers since the [Residential Schools] apology, but the reality is quite contrary…. Reconciliation has to be alive before we can call it dead (cited in Hale, 2020).

Summary

Reconciliation, repairing harm, and building peace require looking back to acknowledge past atrocities and harm, as well as looking forward to new visions and possibilities for the society. Despite these very important critiques and limitations of the TRC, I want to also acknowledge the Survivors who for many years worked for a space to share and have their experiences acknowledged. The Final Report of the TRC could be considered symbolic of a pivot point in the work of the commission – from documenting the truth, to beginning to work towards reconciliation with the Calls to Action (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015e) with a blueprint of concrete actions that can be taken by all levels of government, as well as state actors, civil society, and individuals/communities to address the legacy of the IRSS and to move towards reconciliation (Jung, 2018).

This chapter detailed participants' views of reconciliation in the Canadian setting. Despite, or perhaps in spite of their concerns, participants in this project expressed a commitment to continuing to work in the reconciliation landscape. In this way, they saw the

role of education not *for* reconciliation (as I initially conceived of this project as an early Doctoral student), but rather education *as* reconciliation.

Chapter 7. Findings Part 3: Barriers in the Education System

> The initial educational struggle…has been to sensitize the Eurocentric consciousness, and educators in particular, to the colonial and neo-colonial practices that continue to marginalize and racialize Indigenous students. This does not come easily to Eurocentrically educated Canadians, for it requires their unlearning…of conscious and subconscious notions of meritocracy and superiority…and of how privilege is constructed and maintained in a racist society.
>
> - Marie Battiste (2013, p. 69)

Introduction

After gaining a rich understanding of the perspectives of the participants in terms of their social worlds in a settler colonial state and working towards reconciliation, we then explored some of the challenges in their role as educators working towards reconciliation. In the chapter that follows, I will present the findings as it relates to barriers in the education system identified by participants, including the following two themes: i) Chains, Knots and Threads: Barriers to Education *as* Reconciliation; and ii) Settler Status Quo in Education. These themes will be followed by a discussion of the findings.

Chains, Knots, and Threads: Barriers to Education a*s* Reconciliation

In Chapter 5, a participant referred to interacting systems as structures of oppression as "chains." In Chapter 6, a participant referred to reconciliation as a process of trying to untangle matted threads that are knotted. Influenced by these findings, this theme explores the chains (e.g., neoliberal values, racism) and their interaction with the various knots to be untangled in the education system (e.g., inadequate preparation in teacher education programs) that

dampen the potential of education to serve as reconciliation. These chains, knots, and threads also exacerbate inequities in education for Indigenous students. It should be noted, however, that in presenting these various barriers, I do not mean to create artificial boundaries between them – their interaction is critical. It is only through an understanding of the interactions both within and between levels of analyses and recognition of the intersection of inequities that we can appreciate the pervasiveness of settler colonial relations and their reach into the education system, and thus begin to challenge them. These various chains and knots impacted participants in their role as educators in large part as influenced by their social location. By extension, these challenges also impacted their students, particularly Indigenous students. An Indigenous participant summed up the need to understand those barriers and the ways they have been normalized into the fabric of society:

> You know that barriers that are put up in front of, continuously, of Indigenous people who are attempting to make positive change for themselves are vast. And I think sometimes, without even realizing it, there are ways that in systems we continue to make that worse.

Vision and values. Throughout the interviews, participants expressed concern with what they referred to as the vision and values of the contemporary educational system in the settler colonial context and its dominant pedagogical approaches, curricular development, and assessment strategies. Participants spoke of the education system as being "machine mode and data driven" (settler participant), while another described it as a "factory type of model of being efficient and measuring impact that can't account for other ways of knowing, and of being in the world" (settler participant). A settler participant expressed concern that the

leadership of her division did not problematize this approach enough to account for the ways in which "Indigenous students specifically get lost and forgotten in this system." Similarly, an Indigenous participant spoke at length about the challenges faced by students with difficult lived experiences within a system and a society that has a narrow vision of what it means to be successful:

> They [Provincial Government] value a specific type of learning. The province by what they deem to be appropriate for graduation they are in a sense saying this is what I believe to be valuable, this is what we believe to be important. You know and who in fact is to say that that is more important than a youth taking time away from school to raise a baby? Or who is to say that that is more important than a youth taking time away from school to work because they need to provide for their family right? And I am not saying that for a second that academic learning and education isn't important. But sometimes there are other ways to become successful right. Like becoming a contributing member of society in a good way right. Being a good parent, being a good family member, contributing to meaningful work and whatever that might look like for you right. How do we nurture those skills within our school system and value them in the same kind of way for kids? Right. And putting a timeline on things is also challenging for me. You know if a youth find themselves in a situation where they need to take a break from school for whatever reason it might be then why wouldn't we support them with what they need and then help them when they are ready to return right.

This narrowed approach to defining success as resulting from the vision of the education system was echoed by another Indigenous participant who shared:

> It's the nature of our systems. You know, being dictated by bells and credits and what the province believes to be appropriate timelines for graduation. You know you come in in Grade 9 and then in four years you have 30 credit hours and you are done and if you take six years then that is not quite good enough right. The ways or the mechanisms available to youth to graduate are limited.

This narrow view was cited as being insufficient to grapple with the multi-layered and intersectional challenges Indigenous students were facing. A settler participant shared the following anecdote that she felt highlighted the deficit-focused approach that was particularly detrimental to Indigenous students and importantly that absconded any systemic responsibility for barriers that exist:

> I'm concerned with how we problematize children. So we had this, it was called this Aboriginal Academic Achievement policy in place, but I was seeing the ways that it was implemented in the schools was really an issue and I was told by one administrator, and I know that this directive came from above, that I was in charge of supporting Aboriginal students by organizing an EA [Educational Assistant] to work with the lowest academic Aboriginal students and only them, and only on literacy and numeracy. And then I thought okay, one, how do I reach out to this particular group? I don't think there's only one-, like shouldn't we just *all* [emphasis by participant] be doing things that support academic achievement. I was worried about the problematizing of these specific students, seeking them out, training an EA [educational assistant] to deliver this really piece of their education which is not really their job as an educational assistants. They are not teachers, so even though I would be providing like the, the curriculum and the

> tasks that they needed to be doing, this would be a lot on one person that is not a teacher. And so I also started to look at the way that they were using interventions on these kids. So kind of like this fix-it model and Band-Aid types of solutions that weren't addressing why there were so many kids in our schools that were struggling. And I was told not to use culture, that it was just numeracy and literacy and the EA wasn't to do any type of cultural activity. But I know that culture and identity have an impact on literacy and numeracy and I could give all the research and tell them but yet it was like nobody is even thinking of this as a problem. So I thought if this is happening in one school context, this is probably also happening in other contexts. So this is an experience that I am having and this is some resistance that I am-, or this is some of the dissonance that I am having and that probably other teachers are experiencing.

Interviews for this study took place from July – December 2019. This context is important to consider in light of the emphasis on vision and values. On January 3, 2019, the Manitoba Provincial Government, under Conservative leadership, announced a review of public education in Manitoba (McCracken, 2019). A nine-member Commission for Manitoba Education Review was created that was set to make "bold recommendations to ignite change" within the Manitoba Education system from Kindergarten to Grade 12 (McCracken, 2019). The Commission has been heavily criticized for not having any representation from Indigenous peoples, nor from people with disabilities, newcomers, the 2SLGBTTQIA*community, and other racialized groups. Settler policy analyst Molly McCracken commented "the commissioners' photo released by the province appears shockingly white" (2019). The Commission held public engagement sessions from February to May 2019, with the report initially scheduled to be

released in March 2020. While release of the Review was postponed as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic (Ali, 2021; Geary, 2020), the Conservative provincial government under Premier Brian Pallister has declared its commitment to implementing the recommendations from the 2019 Review through the proposed *Bill 64: The Education Modernization Act* (Government of Manitoba, 2021) which, is as of March 2021, in its second reading in the legislature (Frew, 2021).

Speaking at a time between the Commission's consultations and the release of the report, almost every participant, Indigenous and settler alike, commented with trepidation about the changes that they felt would be recommended and likely implemented resulting from this review. A settler participant shared her thoughts on the review, highlighting the lack of Indigenous representation on the review Board, as well as the overall challenges that come from what she described as the neoliberal model of education being implemented. This participant highlighted the influence of the review beyond just the education system, as typical of, and contributing to, the maintenance of a settler colonial society:

> Part of the bigger problem I think is more than just classroom-based stuff. I think that you know where the money is going, how it is allocated, all those kind of bigger things… Now there's also that Educational Review… Well that's going to be really interesting what happens. Because I think likely it will work against reconciliatory work. I think there will be general approaches and Indigenous priorities will be lost in that. And I think you know there should have been more Indigenous representation on the review committee. I think there is currently only one teacher, those kind of things, already marginalized-, well it shows a marginalized stance, so yeah I guess that I am anticipating

> that there will be some big problems ahead. So there might be a restructuring of education and people will focus on their jobs maybe. But I just kind of think that there's going to be, well we will see what the province really values, and what the priorities are, and what ones are central. I think that it is going to be more of a business type of model. I don't think that it will be a holistic type of thing that supports Indigenous sovereignty, identity, histories. I think it will be homogenous, business-like, neoliberal kind of approach to education.

A settler participant reflected on a recent intervention program within her school divisions and its reliance on western knowledge and neoliberal models and cultures of assessment and efficiencies, and spoke about the need to centre an approach built on Indigenous knowledge:

> We have a reading program happening in many schools that is really getting a lot of praise because it is impacting reading achievement to an extent. But do these kids love to read? Do they know how to read broader than just the book? Do they know how to read the world, the land, those kind of things? I think we need to, there's never going to be a program that can capture all of that, but knowing when a program is not going to go far enough and then knowing okay well who then do I bring in? But teachers want quick things, quick fixes. The administrators want research-based-, [short pause], data driven.

A settler participant expressed her preference for a paradigm shift, with an approach to education that would be value-driven, rather than data driven. She went on to say that being

part of this model of education focused on data and efficiencies had left her feeling a sense of complicity:

> It is easy to get lost in the machine mode, like this data-driven focus in our current division that I think is not being problematized enough. I think, I wish I had had a little bit more of a language for that, to challenge that, to reframe things … Because I think, I think I am really complicit.

Political will. Participants repeatedly expressed their skepticism over the lack of political will at the provincial and national level. An Indigenous participant, when initially asked to discuss what she felt were some of the challenges faced in working towards reconciliation in the educational realm commented without hesitation that it was down to political will (or lack thereof) and settler privilege:

> It comes down to the government. [Laughing]. The government is not committed to reconciliation that's why. Because it's too much work to be done. Because they are looking at that task and to them it is astronomical right. Because they probably have too many people in the hierarchy of our government who are more than comfortable where they are.

A settler participant stated "we need more resources from this government." While some participants felt that their school/school division was adequately resourced in order to provide opportunities that would contribute to Indigenous student success, the majority of participants described a lack of resources in terms of time, staffing and human resources, commitment, and of course financial resources. This included financial resources, at the federal, provincial, divisional, and school level. At the divisional/school level, funding work with Elders in

an ethical and reciprocal manner was also identified as a key concern, as evidenced in the comment from an Indigenous participant:

> Definitely more resources. So resources in the way of you know we have difficulty accessing Elders right to come in. We have difficulty with speakers. And a lot of time that difficulty is due to money. We only have a certain amount. We are on par with all the other Divisions in the city. We can only offer an Elder a certain amount but what if they live out of town right, so we are trying to work with that. And if you don't, how is that respectful to, or embodying reconciliation.

Speaking on the provincial government's commitment to reconciliation, a settler participant was adamant that "reconciliation – it's just lip service in this province." Despite sharing their hope for, and commitment to, education *as* reconciliation, participants expressed skepticism about the likelihood of reconciliation both within and beyond the education system given the current political climate – provincially, nationally, as well as internationally. Participants made connections between their work as educators working towards reconciliation, to broader struggles in Manitoba and indeed across Canada for Indigenous land rights; and internationally to issues such as climate change, poverty, and environmental land rights. Participants also repeatedly referenced rising xenophobia, hate speech, and far-right rhetoric at both the national and international level and how it was "giving permission" (Indigenous participant) for rising anti-Indigenous racism and sentiments.

Poverty and educational outcomes. As a structural and systemic issue, every participant in this project was unanimous in their views that *the* major challenge in their role as educators was poverty in Manitoba, and specifically the impoverishment of Indigenous students. An

Indigenous participant who worked primarily with Indigenous youth shared that "teaching often comes second to the needs and safety of these kids [students]." Another Indigenous educator, when asked to reflect on the challenges of her position and of some of the challenges her students face, commented:

> Food, housing, having a safe place, you know being with safe people, support for academics, parents aren't necessarily able to provide tons of extra dollars for tutoring after school right. So looking for opportunities in communities to access those supports. And you know connections to people who can help them navigate systems. So like if a youth is struggling with health in any way whether it is physical health or mental health, do they have the people in their corners and the ability to navigate a system to get healthy? So, just what we need, [short pause] like what anybody needs to be healthy and happy right, that's what my students need. That's what I want for kids [students], to have those needs met.

Many participants shared that the difficult life circumstances of their students, particularly Indigenous students, including the ways in which various systems of oppression played out in students' lives was not always understood by their colleagues, particularly white, middle and upper class settlers. A settler participant wondered aloud, "can you really appreciate what it's like to come to school hungry when that is so out of anything you can understand, so beyond anything you've known or could even imagine?" Neither was the experience of poverty understood by the neoliberal model that filtered through all aspects of the education system, emphasizing individual deficits and the problematizing of individual students rather than structural barriers. A settler participant commented "you'll hear sort of the rumblings about

this or that kid not doing well or acting in a certain way, and there's a sense of blame. But the blame is never on you know what's happening out there." Similarly, another settler participant recalled trying to understand the challenges Indigenous students were experiencing in the classroom but feeling that it was the children who were being problematized, rather than the structures that were causing their impoverishment:

> Like I was looking at the kids [students] who were struggling… I think the common thing for teachers to do is to look at your class, and then often we have meetings where we try to think about what to do next. Cause you are always thinking what to do next, like you are always thinking of the next step, but then as a whole you are always looking at kind of what is the most urgent needs, and who are those kids, and often those-, often those were Indigenous kids. Although I did have a range, but that was consistent with every grade I had, was that the children that were struggling most were Indigenous kids. But I was finding that there was a problematizing of the child. So rather than looking at broader systems issues, we were always kind of focused on the individual kids, and their deficits and their-, there's kind of a negativity and a blame almost. I mean, not directly, but I, I find that challenging to work against. We collect so much information on the kids, so much data, and it's always looking at them in the way that they need to improve but we are not really questioning broader picture.

The experience of poverty and other life challenges facing already marginalized students impacted many participants in the project. For some, it led to an experience of dissonance. A settler participant for example, recalled her early experiences as an educator, and struggling to come to terms with the difficult life situations facing students in her class, many of whom were

Indigenous. Her narratives highlighted the intersection of various axes of difference that contribute to the oppression of Indigenous students in the classroom:

> And some of the dissonance that I was experiencing was that I was seeing [Indigenous] kids in my classes that were struggling. And I was having trouble knowing how to support them. And I was seeing them come to school hungry, seeing that they were learning other languages and yet that wasn't being honoured in the schools**.**

Another participant shared that it was not just her identity as an Indigenous person that could help her relate to, and understand many of her students, but also the fact that she had a similar lived experience which she openly shared. This similar life experience impacted her approach with students, and over time had helped her to gain the respect and trust of the youth with whom she worked:

> So I had one boy and he disappeared for two weeks because of abuse going on at home. You know he's sleeping in a car, he was in Grade 7. So many children taken out of my classroom by CFS…. I had another student… she can be anything she wants…But she had a horrible life at home… Poverty. The poverty [long pause]. She would come to school tired, who knows what was going on the night before. I knew that she was basically raising her little sister who was about six months old. And she was exhausted. And other teachers would say wake up, you need to do this, come on, you're late. You know, really, you are worried about this kid being late. Get to know their story. So my joke was that my claim to fame was that she never told me to fuck off [laughing]. So she told every other teacher you know but she never did me. And I'm not tooting my horn, it's

about being understanding what these kids are going through right. You know what, she was there, yay. I'm not going to get mad at her because she is half an hour late.

All of the participants in this project asserted that addressing poverty was a crucial component to both education and reconciliation, and that concerted action by the government to address the impoverishment of marginalized communities would make their job as an educator easier:

> What else would make my life easier, and it's not really about my life but about the lives of kids [students] and families would be if we were looking at our provincial strategy on poverty and the reduction of poverty and child poverty in Manitoba and really put some systemic sustainable efforts. And again this really isn't education, this is provincial in scope, into supporting families in that way (Indigenous participant).

> What do I need? I need this government to step up and make sure there are safety nets in place to stop my kids [students] falling through the cracks. That's what I *actually* [emphasis by participant] need (settler participant).

> There's great work being done in the community where I teach. Really wonderful initiatives that help families and that help Indigenous families get access to supports, to healthcare, to childcare. But we need to make sure that we are clear that much [inaudible due to background noise] problems that students are facing comes down to the poverty facing their families through no fault of their own and they can't get out of it. That's where our government needs to step up (Indigenous participant).

Structures of racism and white privilege in schools. Anti-Indigenous racism and prejudice was cited repeatedly by participants in the project as an "overwhelming" and "daunting" challenge within classrooms, schools, and the education system more generally. While one Indigenous educator wavered back and forth on whether the actions of her colleagues and administrators was racist, "there is still such a lot of racism and people are, I'm not going to say racism. It's that people are afraid"; for the majority of participants, anti-Indigenous racism, prejudice, and discrimination was inherent in the education system. An Indigenous participant referred to anti-Indigenous racism as being "engrained in our schools… in the way we teach, in the positions of our kids [students]." Echoing this sentiment, an Indigenous participant felt that despite progress, anti-Indigenous racism remained entrenched in the education system:

> … there is change happening. But, *but* [emphasis by participant], there is still systemic racism in places. There is racism in the nature of how public education system is set up. I think there is. And that for me is challenging. Because I am working in that system right. It is a system that I love. And I am trying to reconcile this idea that all of these youth that I care so adamantly about… to know that sometimes the things we do in education isn't good for them… it is hard. [Long pause].

Anti-Indigenous racism was cited as contributing to an unsafe environment for students and an unsafe workplace for educators. Many participants shared examples of their colleagues openly expressing anti-Indigenous racism. No participant offered any commentary on if and how those incidents were addressed, and in hindsight, I realize that I did not probe this in the interview setting. Participants also shared multiple instances of those more subtle, covert, and everyday

ways in which anti-Indigenous racism, stereotypes, and derogatory comments and assumptions are embedded in their workplace. For instance, a settler educator shared the racist rhetoric she overheard among her colleagues directed towards Indigenous peoples:

> I would have educators say you know they [Indigenous peoples] just want money so why do we have to care. So that spurred me to acknowledge that knowledge was not present. And so that is always the first step. You know before you do *anything* [emphasis by participant] else, you have to make sure that there is knowledge, but not just a colonial knowledge you know, it has to be deeper than that, and so that's always the first step. And that's where we started to build from. And some as I said were on a continuum of understanding.

The lack of understanding about the ways in which race structures society, the inability of colleagues to recognize racism as such, and the limiting of racism to individual behaviours and actions, was noted as a source of frustration for participants. An Indigenous participant voiced concern over the lack of acknowledgement of systemic racism in her former place of employment, particularly among an administrator who "repeatedly claimed it [racist practices] to be just because of a "bad apple" [air quotes used by participant]." A settler participant shared her frustrations about having to repeatedly approach leadership over the racist attitudes of a colleague, but "… worse, like how is [individual] in a leadership role and needs me to explain why it was racist?"

Many participants expressed that they struggled with how best to challenge racism particularly that which is subtle or covert in the education system. A settler participant recalled:

> The [anti-Indigenous] racism in our city is so deep. It is so in our faces but we pride ourselves on not being racist. [Long pause]. I look around sometimes in the staff room or at board meetings and it's there. It can be so hard to put your finger on, it's like the raised eyebrows or nods among teachers when something is say going on with an Indigenous student. It's the language used when talking about Indigenous people like it's us and them. And I just don't know how you even begin to address that.

Similarly, another settler participant shared her challenges in dealing the anti-Indigenous racism she has witnessed within the work environment:

> Like I've heard, you know some colleagues kind of talk about you know that Indigenous populations are growing and how we [white people] are almost becoming like the minority and that kind of thing and it's like what are you talking about? And like I don't know how to engage in that without losing colleagues. And I guess I need to get better at that. But some of the things are just so appalling. And they'll say like oh it's not like we are doing anything harmful, it's not like we are doing anything wrong, we're not part of the problem, you know we are doing the best we can. And there's this like this other kind of narrative happening here. Like I am kind of shocked at how it does come up as if it's not offensive. But then like how you did position it is really offensive, and it went really offensive really quickly.

The emphasis on anti-Indigenous racism as a key barrier in their work towards reconciliation was accompanied also with an emphasis on its corollary and manifesting aspect – privilege, specifically white privilege. Some participants, both settlers and white-presenting Indigenous participants, shared that they felt their white privilege had been a contributing

factor in them gaining and advancing in the employment ladder in the education system. For instance, a settler participant reflected on her relatively new appointment to a position that was previously occupied by an Indigenous man. This participant cited the power of both her white privilege alongside the destructive stories and stereotypes about Indigenous peoples, that potentially led to her getting the job:

> And honestly, that is partially-, that could be a factor impacting where I am today…. I feel that my white privilege… is partially why I got this job. Because I feel like maybe they said you know what, the other guy, people classified him as the "angry 'Indian'" [air quotes used by participants], so you know what she's going to be able to go in and people will go [participant sighs exaggeratedly], she's just like us.

Privilege was repeatedly identified as an issue that was not understood by the majority of white settlers and that cause a great deal of discomfort, and at times outright resistance, in the workplace, and in interactions between educators and the communities with whom they work. An Indigenous participant shared:

> I would say that the idea of privilege is not something that I think the majority of society and I would say educators are no exception to that. And the rhetoric like I didn't have anything when I was growing up, and I worked hard and look where I am, why can't they do what I did, and why can't they get jobs. Like that conversation is being had in spaces and if we think education is an exception to that then we are fooling ourselves. Fooling. And you know the idea that somebody who is white just simply by nature of the colour of their skin allows them space and privilege is valid…. And I think when I was talking about sitting with an Indigenous grandmother in a room in an office at a desk, if you

> think the colour of your skin or what you look like doesn't matter, and if you think your clothing, all of that stuff, if you think that is not a factor in your conversation and that it shouldn't in some way dictate what you say or how you say it, I think you are naïve. And how do people that have that power and privilege use it to advocate for kids. And to be an ally to Indigenous people and Indigenous youth and to Indigenous families in a good way.

Every participant, settler and Indigenous alike, referenced the lack of Indigenous representation at all levels of the educational system, but particularly at the level of administration. An Indigenous person summarized the extent of lack of Indigenous representation in her school division:

> I'm not that Brown, like I'm on the Brown spectrum [laughing], but being one of the very very, very few Brown people in an organization of 2,000 people Pauline, like I can think of maybe three, four people of colour, and I see a lot of people and meet a lot of people.

Similarly, a settler participant described the lack of Indigenous representation as "glaring. And doing nothing for the kids [students]. White kids too, but the effect on Indigenous kids is tremendous." The lack of Indigenous representation at the administrative level and at the Board level was also cited repeatedly as a major concern among all participants.

> We need more representation at the upper levels. And you know even in administration, there's no Turtle Island lived experience in the administration level
> I feel like we need people in these positions um, that have a deep and vast understanding of the work and that will advocate for Indigenous learners in our country. And it is something that I am so passionate about (Indigenous participant).

> … the further you climb in our colonial, hierarchical systems, you become accountable and responsible to more people.… I feel like, not to say my lens is the important lens, but a lens meaning that somebody who is an Indigenous person, because we are very underrepresented in education. And we are even more underrepresented at senior admin. Like very underrepresented in senior administrative roles. [Chuckle]. Like we need more of us. You know more of us need to be doing this work (Indigenous participant).

This lack of Indigenous representation among all levels of the education system led some Indigenous participants to feel like a token. Moreover, for some participants the idea of representation had to be expanded to include educators from varying life experiences:

> There's been struggle feeling like a token. Like a tokenization, of being the expert, of speaking for all Indigenous peoples I mean okay, so Indigenous includes the Métis people right. But it's that lived experience. You know, there's the blood, the blood, the family connection. [Short pause]. And I'm not just talking about the negative lived experience Pauline. But that's part of it too right. It's pretty hard to talk about racism if you haven't -. You know you can talk about it at an intellectual level but it is a personal narrative that has that power, that medicine. So it is those lived experiences. That wisdom, that life wisdom, that knowledge. I don't think there's many of us. I don't know of anybody really in my organization who I could go to and they would say yeah I can relate to say the struggle for identity that you have, that feel of you know a childhood of

> racism and discrimination and that marginalization you know, because of being Indigenous.

Some participants feared that even when Indigenous voices (and/or other progressive voices) do come to positions of influence, they run the risk of being silenced by the "business as usual" approach. An Indigenous person shared the following anecdote:

> But it's because the leadership at the very top you know the Board, no Indigenous representation…. We had a new [leadership position]. And [individual] stood up and said you know I recognize that as a Canadian I haven't learned much about Indigenous peoples history, and I feel angry and ashamed of that and I want to do all I can to make sure that is history is in our schools, so if there is anything you guys need from me then you just let me know, and I am just sitting there and I'm going pinch, pinch, pinch, am I dreaming, did I hear you right. Right. [Short pause]. And I hope that continues, that fire continues, I hope it continues, and that it kind of didn't burn down you know, because you know, [individual] is only one, a strong voice, but only one amidst a lot of voices that are still businesses are usual I could say, or I should say. You know that might be silenced a bit. But it would be nice to see an authentic Indigenous representation, Indigenous voice.

A settler participant also noted what she referred to as a "disturbing trend" in the hiring practices of her school division whereby "they are happy to give small stipends and honorarium, but not a paycheque" to Indigenous Elders, Knowledge Keepers, Indigenous artists, and/or Indigenous educators. Later in the interview, she followed up on that comment and explained:

> I worry about the fact that we claim how important it is to have Indigenous representation. Like that should be commonplace by now, it shouldn't even be considered progressive. And our school, like the leadership, it's as if they are quite happy saying look we brought [names of Indigenous artists, Elders, and authors] and they did this and that with the kids [students]. But in terms of a paid employee or a paid position, why is that not happening? Why aren't the credentials of these experts not good enough then?

Settler Status Quo in Education

This theme explores the ways in which the settler imaginary (outlined in Chapter 5) works to maintain the status quo in the settler colonial context. It operates through a number of different approaches, practices, and sentiments of settlers, including that which is explicit and that which is covert, but which together combine to maintain a settler status quo. The settler colonial status quo is explored through the following sub-themes.

Difficulty acknowledging "what we bring to the table." For many of the participants, being an educator was an important part of their identity. Participants shared that it was "more than a career. It really has been a calling. And even with the long hours, lots of work, and heartache, there is also immense joy" (Indigenous participant). An Indigenous participant with more than 15 years' experience working in the education system shared "[being a teacher] is who I am"; while a settler participant who had been teaching for five years described being a teacher as "something I was born to do." Participants in this project acknowledged the ways in which their identity and social location affected their role as educators. For some participants, this intersection of identities created a sense of tension. A settler participant explained:

> …I am an oppressor, I am a colonizer. Yet I was born here, but I am not Indigenous. You know all these kinds of paradoxes and tensions, so much that I don't know what to call myself. And that's part of who I am and it influences how I am as a teacher.

Speaking on the intersection of her professional and social identity, an Indigenous participant shared: "what I've lived, who I am, how I see myself, and how others see me right. All of that. All of it. We bring it to the table." While another participant highlighted that her professional role came second to identity as an Indigenous person:

> I am not a school division employee who is Indigenous, I am a [Indigenous] person who is a school division employee. And that isn't a 9 to 5 job that then I go home and like you know, I can take that hat off. No. I live it as best as I can, as what makes sense to me.

Acknowledging these different aspects of identity, including race, in the educational system however, was not necessarily considered as common practice. A settler participant explained:

> I think learning about reconciliation is making me realize the importance of stories and our life's work in this work and not being shy to share those things. And I think as educators we are very guarded. We don't want to get personal. We don't want to go there. But we are not seeing the potential of sharing, of sharing aspects of our own lives and who we are and reflecting on them in ways that are helpful.

On acknowledging their identities, another settler participant shared the reluctance of her white settler colleagues to acknowledge their whiteness and the impact it has on their role as teachers and on the knowledge they bring to the class:

> It [my whiteness] has come up with Indigenous colleagues but it doesn't come up with my non-Indigenous white colleagues. So it is something that they [Indigenous

> colleagues] will remind me of, and it's something I am conscious of… But with other white women teachers, it doesn't come up and I think that's part of the problem, is that we are not positioning ourselves and thinking about who are all of we, and who are our kids and whose culture is dominant. And so, I've been thinking a lot about that and thinking of how do you dispel a lot of our own ethnocultural centrism that we are currently doing or thinking about things is not necessarily the best or only way and making sure that that is kind of [participant changes conversation]…. You know I have some Indigenous friends who will say oh how is my white settler friend doing, and we kind of joke about it, but also making it known and reminding me of it which I think is helpful. You know I am not bringing this perspective and don't claim to be.

Similarly, a settler participant shared that while in university studying to be a teacher, she felt that acknowledging her identity, and the identity of students was not a standard practice:

> It was kind of like you just you should do what you were told but you didn't really interrogate the system. Like teach kids the content but you don't teach them how to be involved in a process that questioned the content or their place in that … [A]nd just the idea of acknowledging like the communities that we are working with. Like they are from here, and we are these white settler teachers. And just thinking about that, and our place as a teacher, there was just a lot of things that were unquestioned.

An Indigenous participant asserted, "Who you are matters. Who your kids [students] are matters. You need to understand acutely that culture and identity play a huge role in the success of Indigenous youth in our school system…. This should be a no brainer." A settler

participant wondered if the challenge of acknowledging their identity in their work was connected to the degree of neutrality that was expected as a teacher:

> I mean, as a teacher you are not immune to life. It is not a neutral space. You carry whatever is happening in your life to the classroom. And likewise, I think the students do too and sometimes it becomes a very charged space, right. But like why shouldn't we acknowledge that? Why shouldn't we be reflexive and open?

Related to the notion of teacher identity and neutrality, both Indigenous and settler participants shared examples of the actions of their white settler colleagues who felt a sense of pride and purpose about "saving" Indigenous students. Examples provided in the interviews pointed to the ways in which white settler identity and teacher identity become conflated. Whiteness, neutrality, and the notion of teachers as helpers (but often as saviors) were perpetuated in ways that were unquestioned. Many of the settler participants recalled that they had previously held such views. A settler participant shared some of her experiences working in an inner-city school with other predominantly white settler educators and explained with regret that she had, at least initially, started to adopt a paternalistic view of Indigenous students:

> When I first started teaching at [school], you know there I'd be driving from the [suburban neighbourhood] down to [inner city neighbourhood for]. I had friends at the time who'd sort of joke about my safety going there, like not out of concern, just stereotypes. And I hadn't been in the position long, like not long at all, and I had sort of unconsciously started to sort of say some of the things my colleagues were saying about some of the kids [students]. It wasn't everyone, I'm not saying that. But there was

> definitely this feeling like, I want to say like a resentment towards certain kids and I'll say directed specifically towards Indigenous kids, like this feeling of you know we need to come here and get things sorted out and in order, like we need to be the ones saving these kids, with really no understanding of what these kids live or experience. And then off we go home again. And this you know would be the prevailing feeling.

Similarly, an Indigenous participant shared her own experiences of coming into her role as an educator with the goal to "fix" students:

> I really wanted it, desperately wanted to work in the inner city of Winnipeg. When I first wanted that, I thought you know [short pause] I could go there and I could help to fix things. Right. And I had that mentality right. And In hindsight now sixteen years later, I think to myself, *how dare you* [emphasis by participant]. People don't need to be fixed. You know our communities are hurting, and you know for *good reason* [emphasis by participant]. And it's more about the empowerment and walking alongside people. And building capacity and bringing out strength and resiliency that is already there than it is about fixing. But when I was twenty, I think that was my mindset. And I think honestly, it's a lot of people's mindsets when you first go into education. I mean we go into that field because we want to be a helper. But there are different ways to help and when you are young you might not always see those. Or be able to articulate them. And it was very shortly after-, and I credit that first elementary school teaching experience I had with so much of my professional learning and really setting me on a path in my career to do the work that I am doing now.

This notion of saving or fixing primarily Indigenous students is problematic given that many educators did so with little understanding or recognition of the multiple and interlocking barriers facing Indigenous students. Moreover, it is accentuated by the tendency among some educators as positioning Indigenous families and parents as adversaries in a child's education, the notion of fixing, working to maintain power asymmetries. An Indigenous participant cited her concerns about a common sentiment of educators "who feel like they are doing charity by just doing their job and trying to feel good about it. That needs to stop." Similarly, a settler participant explained:

> I kept thinking about how we were doing our job and kind of feeling good about our role and kind of building ourselves up as teachers, but not seeing the parents as helpers and partners in what we were doing. We weren't seeing the community as a supports-. We would be in meetings, and often there was this common feeling of negativity towards parents, towards community members as a way of kind of building ourselves up as teachers. Like as a way we were kind of like saving these kids.

Participants who shared such stories explained that through events such as the apology or TRC (as outlined in Chapter 5), happenchance encounters with community members, or developing relationships with mentors, they had come to see that these views were problematic. A settler participant shared that she had in recent years tried to emphasize honouring the students she works with and the complex lives that some of them lead, rather than saving them:

> But I am also somebody that I don't know, I am sensitive towards kids' situations, and I get emotionally invested in their lives and trying to you know… So I had to think of a way

to be their teacher that could honour each person, honour who they were, honour their families, and just try to do what I could given my context and just trying to keep it manageable.

Colonial mindsets. Participants in the project also highlighted that despite progress, there remains a lack of knowledge about Indigenous perspectives, worldviews, and history outside of a colonial gaze and that this continues to influence curriculum and curriculum development. Participants reflected on the permanence of a colonial pedagogy and colonial knowledge, and the impacts that this has on their work today in the education system. A settler participant recalled her first year of teaching, and of witnessing an interaction between a fellow white teacher (now retired) and an Indigenous student that highlighted the ignorance of, and destructive nature of stories, as well as the subtle ways that Indigenous students have to resist these tropes, in ways that white students do not. The following excerpt details the interaction she witnessed:

> You know a lot of things from my first year of teaching stand out but at the time I was just trying to manage. And figure out my way. And so maybe about three, yeah three months in maybe, I just happened to overhear this kid [student] talking to their teacher…. I wish I knew how the conversation had started. And keep in mind this is a child…. But this child was actually the one having to explain to the teacher the complex political systems that existed in Indigenous communities prior to Europeans…. And by the end of the year, knowing that teacher and their views on Indigenous peoples, like my god. But the teacher was just there, back up against the wall. Literally. And like stern, and dismissive. But the best part was as the kid was walking away, that's when

> they walked past where I was, I watched her walk shaking her head and say something along the lines of "read a book" …. But why should these kids have to be the ones to challenge that. Like this is what these kids are up against.

This colonial knowledge and worldview was inextricably linked to the overarching neoliberal focus of education. A settler participant explained:

> You know, there's a white Eurocentric perspective that is still dominant and that Indigenous knowledges aren't, they aren't honoured. And even, there's getting out on the land, or seeing opportunities for educative opportunities beyond the school and the classroom I think is part of breaking down some of those colonial barriers and yet there is this view that that's not, not seen as valuable or won't help them [students] get a good job. So like what are the main aims of education. I think a lot of people would say oh to create productive citizens that can function in community and by community they mean like the corporate kind of capital community.

A settler participant explained how she continued to wrestle with the challenges of the hegemony of knowledge, and the reluctance and even denial to engage in discussions of the ways in which colonialism continues to structure our lives:

> I think the way we, well even knowledges, so like whose knowledge is valued, whose knowledge comes into curriculum discussions, whose kind of epistemologies or ontological perspectives are central and how we come to know and come to be. And I think it's ingrained in so many aspects that it's become-. Like I've been learning about this idea that it is this absent presence, like this colonial presence, it's just there and unquestioned and it's just common sense that it becomes difficult to see, it's this

> hegemonic idea that just dominates. Yeah, so I guess just bringing awareness to some of these ways that it is really tangible. And I think that's what I am trying to do is to make some of these colonial things super concrete. Like a name [of a school, or a street] is super concrete. And it is also easy to change, although I'm also realizing that it's actually not because people don't even want to engage in it. Which is the whole point, there's an opportunity for that kind of discussion.

Related to the challenge of null and hidden curriculums, was the challenge of trying to implement a progressive curriculum when educators themselves still hold deep biases and colonial knowledge:

> You know, I still have deep concerns about the way we present nation building in this country to our kids [students]. The books might be better. But the teaching hasn't really caught up. I guess what I really have the issue with is my colleagues who truly believe those narratives of nation building. So how can we do better for our kids [students]? How can reconciliation ever happen?

Understanding and making connections between settler colonialism and the roles of educational institutions in upholding that settler colonial system was cited by many participants as lacking among the majority of their settler colleagues. An Indigenous participant felt that because of the profound role the education system has had in causing harm to Indigenous communities, those working within the education system have a responsibility to recognize the intergenerational impacts of that harm in every interaction with Indigenous students and their families:

> Education has been a system historically that has caused a tremendous amount of damage and genocide and trauma. Like it has been a mechanism for genocide and trauma to Indigenous people across our country. And it can still cause trauma for Indigenous peoples, potentially. And you know, if those things don't run through your mind when you are teaching, when you are learning, when you are with students or sitting there meeting with family to talk about something hard, then I think shame on you.

Similarly, a settler participant shared:

> You know the very nature of our country, like the education system, it can be really unfair to Indigenous kids and their families. But its more than just fairness, it can cause damage. You know if Indigenous kids aren't centred. And rarely they are [*sic*]. So I'm always trying to think, you know if I'm saying my role here as an educator that my work is about reconciliation, then I should centre those [Indigenous] kids, have their needs in my head, and think how would everything I'm doing here impact them, help them. But I'm not sure my colleagues would see it this same way. [Long pause]. Well no it's that they don't feel the same way.

The extent to which the education system continues to cause harm to Indigenous youth, while also contributing to unequal relationships between settlers and Indigenous peoples was an issue that participants stated caused them pause for consideration in their everyday work. An Indigenous participant recalled:

> And I was at a conference last week and I was talking to people about how we attempt to make youth and families fit in to this box that is public education or this box that is

> healthcare or this box that is postsecondary education like university or whatever it might be. But for me when it comes to the idea of Indigenous pedagogy and how we are supporting youth, it is far deeper idea or ideal than simply talking about content and curricula. Like how do we, in the positions where we are permitted to, or given power to, how do we make our systems work for kids. And having it be the other way around. Because often their response to what we are asking them to do, like people get frustrated or angry or a youth is misbehaving or not meeting expectations. Or why can't family do this? Or why can't mum do that? Or why isn't grandma returning my call? But like when you really take a long look at what's happened and in many cases what is happening, their responses are actually quite normal.

Similarly, an Indigenous participant explained:

> We are beginning to talk more about Residential Schools and the damage they have done. And Survivors have voiced that. They have shared that pain, that suffering. But making that connection, to the lives of the [Indigenous] children that I work with today. That's really key. And to mix that in with every other obstacle that's in these kids' way. Because the harm that educational institutions have had, and really let's be honest, that they can, well that they continue to have on Brown children in this country is tremendous. And I say this as someone working in schools. But it feels like we don't always take responsibility for that.

The acknowledgement of the harm done by the educational system was difficult for some participants to wrestle with, particularly given the intersection of many participants' social identities with their identity and role as an educator. A settler participant shared:

> I had this view of education this really, you know this valued social role that was really optimistic and hopeful and educate the young kids of tomorrow. And it's this really pleasant aspect. So then, with the TRC and you know thinking about how teachers have been historically part of a *big* [emphasis by participant] problem, now I see that role as much more complex and problematic. And I see that teachers have been contributors to oppression and have contributed to people losing their culture and identity. So now I am problematizing that role of teacher and that notion of teacher so whereas I got into it for these kind of hopeful-, and I still am hopeful. But there is a quality to it now that is kind of marred because of the history.

Settler ignorance. Repeatedly, the findings in this project point to settler ignorance as key to maintaining the settler status quo. This settler ignorance was pervasive among teacher candidates, new educators, as well as established teachers, though manifest in different ways.

Throughout the interviews, almost every participant, Indigenous and settlers alike, and regardless of how long they had been teaching, explained that teacher education had not prepared them for their roles. One settler participant felt that adequate preparation "may never be possible [given that] education is a profession you grow into." However, for most other participants, there was a need for drastic changes to teacher education if the educational system was to make a marked inroad in operating as reconciliation. A settler participant commented "having a mandated course [on Indigenous content for educators] is a small positive step. I think it's not nearly enough." Participants highlighted the continued lack of knowledge among settlers about settler colonialism in Canada. A settler recalled meeting with teacher candidates for their practicum and commented that many were "blindly unaware…still

don't know" about the IRSS. For some participants there was a sort of impatience that new teacher graduates from Manitoba-based education programs were still lacking in this knowledge after recent completion of university. A settler participant asked rhetorically, "have they been living under a rock?" Participants highlighted the need for not only knowledge on the IRSS, but also an expanded knowledge base and revised university program that centred Indigenous education in teacher education. An Indigenous participant who also works with individuals training to be educators shared the following anecdote:

> I am amazed, shocked even, at how many 5th year Education students, just so shocked at the number of students that are fifth year education students that know *nothing* [emphasis by participant] about reconciliation. I am, I am *stunned* [emphasis by participant]. Like what is going on. I don't know what is going on. Is it the program, is it- I don't know. I'm just shocked. I think as a first step, education students have to be immersed, have to be immersed in Indigenous education, you know at University. They have to be *immersed in it* [emphasis by participant]. Not just one course. And you know what, if they are biased, then maybe they need to find another profession. Like if those students are in university and saying things like I can't stand taking all this quote unquote "*Indian* stuff" [air quotes used by participant], then maybe they'll realize, they should realize that this is not for them. The reality is that we have Indigenous students coming from up North, coming from in care [child welfare system] … Because this is the reality, this is what our society is.

Another Indigenous participant echoed the sentiment that Indigenous content must permeate all aspects of a teacher's education:

I think that teacher training in post-secondary institutions is very very [*sic*] important. It's been ten years since I've been at university but when I was here I didn't have to take any courses on Indigenous peoples. And I ended up taking some because I wanted to, not because I had to. But they were very archaic. Like the history of the "North American Indian" [air quotes used by participant]. I think was one of the titles of one of the classes I took at university. *Like what, what* [emphasis by participant]. And so, I think that, I am not quite certain that every professor in the Faculty of Education across all streams, meaning elementary, junior high, and high school, across all teachables, would be articulating and including Indigenous content into their curriculum in a way that I believe it to be needed. And not like a standalone course. Like a standalone course isn't bad. I'm not opposed to a standalone course, not like I'm the one deciding. I'm not opposed to a standalone course, but I think that it needs to come in multiple spaces. And it needs to be non-negotiable…. I feel like capturing the importance of this work when students are here sets all the stage of all the groundwork that is going to happen in schools and in society…. And just by nature of being Canadian-. If you want to learn about being Italian, you would likely go to Italy, if you wanted to learn about language, or about culture, ceremony, history, you could go. If you want to learn about what it means to be immersed in Filipino culture and talk about all the amazing food and language and culture and traditions that are so special to that community, you could go to the Philippines. If you want to learn about what it means to be in Canada, then you need to know about Indigenous peoples and knowledge and learn about foods and

> richness and strength and culture and traditions and resiliency. So by nature of being here, by living on this land, on this space, it is our responsibility to do this work.

An Indigenous participant highlighted the importance of faculty members at universities being able to communicate effectively the necessity of teaching Indigenous education in the Canadian setting:

> And if a professor at a Canadian institution can't answer that question of why Indigenous education and I don't care what course you are teaching, if you are teaching in the Faculty of Education, I mean I would argue that if you are teaching anything, but for the purpose of this study talking about education. But if you have got a professor that can't answer that question in a deeply contextual way then you have no business being a professor of teachers.

In addition to the desire for a teacher preparation that was immersed in knowledge of settler colonialism, as well as Indigenous knowledges and worldviews, participants also expressed a desire for an education that developed "anti-racist tools – like why was that not central in my education" as well as critical thinking skills for themselves as educators, but also ways to foster those same skills in their students. A settler participant explained:

> There wasn't a like a critical stance that were being taught in the B.Ed. courses… it was something that was missing from the University. It was just kind of like you just did what you were told but you didn't really interrogate the system. Like you taught kids the content but you didn't teach them how to be involved in a process that questioned the content or their place in that. And that was something were I wish I was-, like some of those processes I wish I was taught or invited into more of a dialogue.

Participants were also explicit in the need for adequate preparation and subsequent supports to be able to better cope and address the different life experiences of their students, specifically Indigenous students, and the structural issues experienced by those communities. A settler participant shared her that in her first year teaching, her classroom had a high percentage of Indigenous students:

> I wasn't prepared for the socio-cultural aspect of teaching, like the-, I was just kind of thinking of it as this knowledge transmission sort of thing. Even though I was very inquiry-based and things, I thought holistically, and I tried to integrate subject matter, and I tried to be creative in the ways that I was doing, I was still missing the cultural pieces and how to bring that in.

An Indigenous participant, who spoke of living a sheltered life shared that her preparation for the levels of poverty among her students came not from her university education, but rather because members of her family have extensive experience working in inner-city Winnipeg:

> I would say maybe a bit more prepared than others because [family member] had been a classroom teacher in the inner city. And I got I would say a great deal of my knowledge about school systems and structures and workload, in the traditional sense, meaning what public schooling would look like. So I went in with my eyes wide open. You know, I knew that it was going to be hard, that it was going to be something that would stretch me, and that causes a lot of people in their first couple of years in education to think like is this for me or not. Was I prepared for the level of poverty, and challenges within family systems and challenges within reaching youth successfully, that piece for sure I was not prepared for.

Repeatedly throughout the interviews, participants shared that there remained a large number of their well-established colleagues that continued to know (or claimed to know) very little about the IRSS. A settler participant who had recently taken on a leadership position at a new school shared that her ardent commitment to reconciliation reflected in part the lack of knowledge among a large number of educators at her school about the IRSS:

> And so, still understanding that this learning needs to happen with both our educators and our students. And everyone is on a continuum. Right. Everyone has this continuum. So when I first came here, there was many people, many of our educators that they still didn't understand about Residential Schools. And I understood that I have to be part of that knowledge building, and capacity, and I knew that as a leader, whatever I knew, and the people that I really connected with over the past decade or so, like I needed to bring forth that.

Similarly, a settler participant recalled a recent interaction with a white colleague at a professional development (PD) day. She estimated that this colleague had been teaching for approximately five years in an inner-city school. She recalled that after a presentation on the IRSS and reconciliation, the colleague leaned over and asked "so it was called a Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Like genuinely, she was shocked that this [TRC] was in her lifetime. I was shocked. She was shocked." Participants expressed difficulties in coming to terms with, or perhaps believing that many of their colleagues still lacked this knowledge. A settler participant asked "for how long can we get away with saying I didn't know. I don't know [long pause]."

Settler apathy. Over the course of all of the interviews, participants shared their challenges, frustrations, and dismay over what they described as sense of apathy in the

education system. They spoke of many of their colleagues – new and established educators alike – as exhibiting disinterest, resistance (both passive and active), and complacency as it related to reconciliation in the education system. An Indigenous participant shared her frustrations over the lack of interest on Indigenous content among new educators, including those who have recently graduated:

> So you'll get some really really [*sic*] passionate people. And that's great. It's what we need. But I also get the people staring in the distance when I talk. Or the blank stares and the eye rolls when I mention anything about land or treaties or my community. There's just this fundamental lack of interest.

Meanwhile, a settler participant shared her accounts of disinterest among more established educators:

> You know, overall, there is sort of a normalized way of doing things that doesn't acknowledge the history, and doesn't interrogate some of the current issues, and inequities in education. So I think a lot of people are still quite content you know just doing their job like just basic, as they were taught themselves thinking that they are doing right and they are fine with that.

Similarly, a settler participant spoke about:

> The kind of ongoing bias. That's, [short pause], it's a lot. So there's a lot, trying to get those teachers who have no interest, just no interest and you're trying to get them on board. It's letting teachers know that it's okay to teach about things, like the treaties are a wonderful step to teach about this. And telling teachers actually you must be teaching this. But there's a lot, a lot of challenges.

A settler participant shared what she described as a passive resistance among established educators:

> And then there are some things that are happening. You know like the KAIROS Blanket Exercise is really popular in schools, but I have heard, I have been part of that probably three times and I have seen people react in different ways and I wonder are those processes actually mobilizing for teachers. Are those exercises, are they helping people transform their practices. Are they shutting people down and making them more apathetic because they think well I can't do anything, I don't know this stuff, I don't want to step on people's toes. So there is this passive resistance, you know. And so, there is still a lot of teachers who aren't willing to make changes in their work. And there's actually a lot of leaders in education who aren't willing to go there either, just no desire.

While another settler participant commented:

> So, but what I think is still missing is that if you are a teacher that graduated you know ten years ago right, so I have been a teacher for about ten years, so they aren't getting anything new necessarily to tweak their thinking. You know so how they started their teaching is how they are continuing. So there is new teachers who are coming in with new perspectives, but how do you support those who are already in the field, not necessarily seeking out PD [professional development] in this area, and aren't necessarily willing to engage in in reconciliatory work or just don't care to.

That disinterest, resistance, and complacency at the hands of settler educators at times extended to the interactions educators have with students. An Indigenous participant shared

the importance of an educator who is committed to building and ensuring respectful relationships with students:

> Not all kids learn the same. Teachers must understand that relationships are the road to developing community and safety in your classroom. It requires that you are interested in kids [students]. It requires that you are kind and respectful to kids always, and somebody who talks kind and respectfully about kids even when nobody is watching, you know. Those behind closed doors conversations that educators have or that administrators have. How do we talk about, at Indigenous kids, what are the words we use to describe them and their behavior even when we are frustrated or even when they have made a bad choice.

Participants suggested various reasons for this disinterest, resistance, and complacency – white fragility, anti-Indigenous prejudice and racism, lack of knowledge of Canada's history, lack of understanding of Indigenous worldviews, and lack of awareness of contemporary oppression. An Indigenous participant shared:

> There's so many [challenges], there really are. [Sigh]. The biggest challenge is getting over the bias. Getting over the white fragility. I worry that a lot of times when teachers say oh I can't do that [Indigenous education], you know is it because they feel they have a justifiable reason, or really is it just because they don't want to or don't care to.

Participants in this project were divided as to how best to address this apathy among their settler colleagues. At one end of the spectrum was a recognition that both "undoing everything you thought you knew, and trying to relearn it, I get it, it takes time" (Indigenous participant). Participants who shared this view made allowances for growth and advocated for

patience with their fellow educators to come to a place of relearning. They also recognized that "teaching is a profession you evolve into" (settler participant). Yet, at the opposite end of the spectrum were voices who felt that there is "absolutely no room for your complacency and ignorance in this field [education]" (settler participant). There was an added element of time pressure given the continued inequities in the educational system. This was demonstrated in the comment of a settler educator who felt that "Brown students do not have the luxury to wait for you to learn what you should know. Or for you to become anti-racist." Similarly, an Indigenous participant added "…teachers either need to get on board [with reconciliation] or get out. Like I am one of those people that will say like get on board or get out."

The settler educators' playbook. Participants detailed various actions and responses of settler colleagues – both deliberate strategies and unconscious biases – that together worked to defend or further entrench the settler status quo in the education system. It is important to note here that participants did not share these insights in an attempt to remove themselves from such actions, or settler status quo. They cited their own journey through problematic assumptions and practices, however, perhaps what distinguishes them is that they have at least attempted to acknowledge and address these actions.

Lowering the bar. Indigenous participants in particular touched on the assumption by many of their settler colleagues that Indigenous students could only succeed in the classroom if expectations were lowered. An Indigenous participant shared a recent anecdote that emphasized this point, while also highlighting the need to consider the lived experiences of students and providing supports not just to the student, but to the family, and work to remove systemic barriers in order to help Indigenous students succeed:

I had a colleague say to me once in a conversation. We were discussing Indigenous student achievement rates compared to non-Indigenous achievement rates divisionally in a space that I was working previously. And we were looking at the differences because there are vast differences right. And that is not a surprise to anyone right. Indigenous youth are, according to the province, underperforming in attendance, underperforming in credit acquisition, and underperforming in graduation. It's a big gap. So we were looking at Grade 12 provincial assessment data, so Grade 12 exams in Math and English… so it was just as a point of discussion to talk about how as schools we support Indigenous learners and what we are doing to support and enhance programming for Indigenous youth. And I had a colleague who said to me well 58% or 52% whatever the number was, it was low, of a school for Indigenous youth passed an exam and the colleague said to me well that percentage wouldn't be good for me at my school, but at your school that would be a pretty good mark right, like 52% of kids passed at your school, wouldn't that be good. And, and in all honesty, I don't think for a minute they thought they were being offensive. I don't think for a minute it was coming from a place of them trying to be unkind. But I do think it came from this deep place of, of a lack of knowledge right. Like no, in fact, I want *all of my youth* [emphasis by participant] to be passing their Grade 12 provincial exam, and in fact I have the same goals for my kids as you do for yours. You know and I feel that if we begin to lower our expectations for Indigenous learners we are wading into dangerous waters. Because they are capable. *They are capable* [emphasis by participant]. If we do a good job at removing the barriers and if we do a good job at providing supports and resources, and

> *providing families* [emphasis by participant] with supports and resources, so that the playing field becomes level, they are capable of achieving the same things that all youth are capable of achieving.

In a similar vein, an Indigenous participant shared a recent interaction with a white settler colleague who felt that rather than adapting new or different assessment measures or providing support to youth, the key to Indigenous student success was to lower expectations:

> I realized like this guy doesn't think our Indigenous youth will be successful, like yeah, he said it to me without even realizing, he said it to me. Are there teachers that attempt to lower expectations because they think they are being helpful, for sure. It is kind of an indirect form of racism. You are not capable so I am not going to expect as much. But I think it's not about that right. If you have a youth who is tired or hungry, then get them to school, feed them, let them have a nap and then let's get them to work…. We need to build capacity in them [Indigenous students] to help them see it in themselves. And understand that we see it in them.

"There's no Indigenous kids in this class." Participants described a problematic sentiment among their settler colleagues of seeing the need to teach Indigenous content as necessary only if there are Indigenous students in their classroom. A settler educator shared an example of the reaction of her colleagues to her attempts to bring in more Indigenous content at her new school:

> So at first it was we don't need to do that [Indigenous content] here. You know this idea that there are hardly any Indigenous peoples here, you know, we just go to Festival de

> Voyageur, and that's what we do. We don't need to do anything about that [Indigenous content].

Similarly, a white presenting Indigenous participant shared the reactions of her colleagues when she made a presentation about the need to incorporate more Indigenous content in all of their work at a staff meeting:

> I brought it up very informally. I had been there a while, enough to see what sort of the standard was in terms of inclusion of Indigenous perspectives, of teaching about Treaties, and so I thought okay I'll do it this way. So I start to see some of my colleagues sort of shift in their seats. There was no disagreement or anything, just sort of silence. But then after, I had a colleague coming up, she teaches [role at school], and said something like that she appreciated the information but then turned it around to say that she didn't think it was necessary at [school] basically because of the demographics of the area. She was very polite. But just didn't get it. And the funny thing is, I don't even know if she knew that I am Indigenous, so how does she know which of her kids [students] are [Indigenous or not].

Reconciliation. Check. Many participants described a tendency of reducing reconciliation – the language of reconciliation, the notions of building relationships, the Calls to Action from the TRC – to a "checkbox" that could be marked off without any further investigation or deep interrogation. An Indigenous participant expressed her concern of those "teachers who just think its bullshit you know. We have the teachers who are just basically checking off the box" and yet having that work equated with or as reconciliation. This sentiment was echoed by another settler participant who described that her colleagues would

claim to be working towards the TRC's Calls to Action (2015e) without ever reading the Summary Report (2015c), which she saw as a crucial part of the problem:

> I think the TRC Calls to Action I think people are kind of more familiar with in the notion of acknowledging the schools [Residential Schools]. But not necessarily kind of the Summary Report pieces which I think that is part of the problem. It's this sort of naïve type of action, but still not addressing the history. You know if you haven't read it [Summary Report] there is still an opportunity to do so…. Like don't just kind of say oh like I kind of missed the time to read it. There's always time to revisit it. And it can be a book study, professional learning communities. Like we always search out these other authors and what's the next bandwagon kind of things and it's like well why don't we just read this. You know we can read this and reflect. And see how it relates to our practice.

Similarly, a settler participant noted:

> I am seeing that reconciliation and education was being approached in schools in a way that was only about the positive, and that was really like people just doing things and posting it like #ReconciliACTION.[16] Like well, I feel like there's more to it. Like if all these nice things are happening but yet we are not looking at the fact that we are not getting enough funding for inner-city schools. Or that there is, there are so many issues that are not being addressed but yet it was being, it was politicized as like this, you know we are doing a lot in the division, we are so great, we are supporting Indigenous students, we

[16] #ReconciliACTION is a popular hashtag on social media, and has been likened to click-tivism or slacktivism – the idea of performing your support for a social cause particularly on social media, yet requiring little commitment or follow-up action.

have Indigenous language programs and all is good. And you know, it is, it was just not addressing some of the challenges and some of the truths. That was not the general conversation.

Another Indigenous participant shared:

> I see people in the schools throw around that term [reconciliation] around so they are yes, I've done reconciliation today and like I am going to check it off. It happens in a lot of places. And I am unsure whether it happens intentionally or you know just because people don't know any better. But I feel like you should make it your business to know better.

Indigenous content = Residential Schools = Reconciliation. Participants also spoke about the ways in which their settler colleagues felt that education about Canada's relationship with Indigenous peoples and Indigenous education could be equated with a lesson on Residential Schools. An Indigenous participant noted, "There are a lot of teachers that teach about reconciliation but *all* [emphasis by participant] they talk about is Residential Schools. And they think that that is reconciliation." A settler participant shared that she had been privy to conversations in her lunchroom where colleagues, all of whom she believed to be white settlers, had expressed confusion over the notion of teaching anything other than "issues" when it came to Indigenous content. She facetiously asked:

> I mean how can teaching about Indigenous peoples be about anything other than issues *right* [emphasis by participant]. Sadly, I really think that's a lot of the perception, so you know or a lot of my colleagues, you mention Indigenous peoples, and all they can think of is Residential Schools. And if they can provide a lesson on that, well they are patting

themselves on the back. It's almost as if they cannot even grasp that Indigenous peoples would have fully functioning politics, societies you know anything like that before the white man came. And to even begin to talk about Indigenous ontologies or epistemologies, that's just unfathomable for so many of us. And I'm not outside of all of this, like I had thoughts like that too. But I am trying to grow my knowledge. Because it's necessary. Absolutely.

Participants expressed concern with such an approach and the impacts that it has on Indigenous students in the classroom. An Indigenous participant commented:

> Right, so, you know the thing is I find a lot of First Nations students, Indigenous students, they are the ones going like this [participant motions leaning back in chair, with arms crossed]. You know arms crossed, and the reason I think is because, I think we as educators are sometimes doing it wrong. We *talk so much* [emphasis by participant], well I guess the ones that do [short pause and sigh], we talk so much about Residential Schools. And we talk so much about the negative things that happened to First Nations people. And imagine you are a First Nations kid in a classroom and *all* [emphasis by participant] you hear is shitty things about this is what happened, you were taken, you were this and that, you know, you are living it at home, you *absolutely know* [emphasis by participant] what has happened right. So I can understand why kids are like [motions a long sigh] sometimes you know, that's all I ever hear about my people. So I think it is important to teach kids that but then I think it's important to celebrate, First Nations culture and beliefs and knowledge systems without only focusing on Residential Schools.

Similarly, a setter participant shared that "it is important that people know that Residential Schools happened. It is important that they know, you know the *effects* [emphasis by participant] of Residential Schools, but then I think it is also important that we return to Indigenous knowledge systems."

Because so many educators see Indigenous content as equated with only Residential schools, participants identified a related trope used by many settler colleagues who resist teaching such content, because in the words of Indigenous participant, "you know I've heard things like I don't want to teach that – it's so depressing." This strategy however, should not be confused with the recognition that teaching about Residential Schools is in fact difficult knowledge (Pitt & Britzman, 2003), for both educators and students, and that completing lessons on such content within the dictates of the school system does not allow for adequate time to teach, and support students, particularly Indigenous students. A settler participant shared:

> This idea that this is difficult knowledge that we are engaging with. We are dealing with traumas, we are dealing with this mismatch of ideologies or knowledges and there is, there is lovely knowledge and this is really difficult knowledge. It is difficult to discuss, it is difficult to engage students with this. This, it leaves like, somebody, I can't remember who said it but it leaves like a colonial residue on you, you are carrying this with you and it has an emotional toll. I think it takes a lot for teachers to engage in that work…But I think a lot of people, say with like young kids, you are dealing with such challenging content and them expecting them to kind of snap out of it and go onto the next thing. Like you know your hour of this is done so now you go and switch gears to this. But holy,

> we are dealing with really intense stuff and how do you do this in an honourable way and how do you support kids in like, in actually, making sense of it in not a traumatizing way. And I think a lot of teachers are dealing with that too and trying to [short pause] … And I think that teachers aren't getting enough sort of emotional support in how to do it, and I think they are not getting support in how to help students in that… And so we like, the idea of difficult knowledge and how to engage with difficult knowledge in a productive way and how to, how getting enough support for this type of work. And this type of work needs time. It cannot be done within the desired time, but, I guess that's another colonial thing.

Tokenism. Tokenism is the practice of doing a particular action for appearances sake, or in order to prevent deeper criticism or interrogation of the more structural inequities that exist. Repeatedly in this project, participants shared their concerns about the approach of settler educators who will be comfortable in bringing in Indigenous cultural teachings, without connecting it to broader curricular activities, as a means of simply checking off a box. An Indigenous participant shared:

> So you know sometimes I'll say to teachers like how are you going to support First Nations students in both literacy and numeracy. And there's not much of a response. Because a lot of people have stuck to the culture. So we call it the tokenistic thing, like just check off the box. So they will say, oh can you come in and teach us some drumming. Boom. Done. Oh can you come in, you know, can you come in and teach us about Medicines. Boom. Done. But now, what I'm doing is I say okay great, you know

there were lessons on Medicines or drumming, but how are you connecting that to the curriculum.

Another Indigenous participant who felt strongly that culture should be included in the curriculum expressed her frustration of those who do so as a standalone:

> Culture is of course crucial. But you know, ok so you got a drum, and it is going to sit in your classroom like tokenistic, oh look I have a drum. Well no. So we have really cracked down on that.

This tokenism was not only limited to issues of curricula and culture, but as identified earlier in the chapter, was also key in the representation of Indigenous peoples in education, particularly at the upper levels and feelings among Indigenous educators. An Indigenous participant explained:

> Inclusion is you know you have a voice at the table. And an active voice. Not a tokenistic voice, right, because I've felt that. But right now I have an ally in a powerful leadership position who uses his privilege and power to make sure that there is a space for voice or voices.

I can't teach that. Another tactic identified by participants in the project was the response from a number of their settler colleagues that they could not teach Indigenous content, be it because they were uncomfortable, because they felt that "wasn't their place", or because they were scared to make mistakes. Other participants also cited racism and a reluctance to make changes to settler educational practices. An Indigenous participant explained that this could be partly related to the difficulties for some participants in knowing which Indigenous content was appropriate for settlers to teach. She went on to explain that at

times disagreement among her team created more of a challenge in how to direct settlers to take on this task of incorporating Indigenous content:

> Like we have some people on our team who are very traditional and they say oh no, no, no you can't talk about the Medicines. Like you can't talk about you know whatever it may be. But we also have other people who are like yeah you can talk about the Medicines, that's not ceremony. You are not taking the kids into a Sweat. So that's the challenge.

However, other participants felt that this lack of clarity about what can and should be taught by settler educators was manipulated by settler colleagues who were in fact just reluctant to teach an accurate account of history, such as the following statement from an Indigenous participant:

> And they [teachers] go, you know I can't do that [teach about Indigenous content], I talked to so and so… And I go *yeah you can* [emphasis by participant]. They [teachers] are just reluctant to talk about anything -, you know, can I do that if I am not Indigenous. You know and I go *absolutely you can* [emphasis by participant] do that. Like you are not teaching ceremony. You are teaching history. When I say that, that's the reaction that's interesting. Cause [*sic*] you know they'll still be making excuses.

A settler participant expressed that she understands the reluctance of some of her settler colleagues in teaching Indigenous content, in cases where those teaching may be construed by Indigenous students and their families as the imposition of a particular narrative by a white settler. However, she also added that she will try to work alongside those colleagues who continue to experience discomfort to incorporate Indigenous content because in her words it is "how we do business now":

> I try to keep in mind that [Indigenous] students could potentially bring back things to their home are like not welcome necessarily. So like oh your white teacher is telling you about this, well what did they say about that? And like, they are bringing it home and it can fester some issues. And if teachers and communities and parents are not in collaboration, it could re-create a tension that oh now they think they know better about this and so now they are telling us. You know but I'll say [to settler educators] this is how we do business now and that is wonderful and then I think that there was some gentle pushing and pressure to those that have always accepted the status quo. That maybe they felt uncomfortable with that. And I had conversations with them. You know I was never one to back away from some of their judgements or preconceived notions and just kind of you know asking more questions, asking more questions.

An Indigenous participant however, felt that this idea of being uncomfortable or offensive was an inappropriate and inadequate response, particularly given the urgency of teaching Indigenous education:

> You know people would say all the time, this is the shtick; well I am not Indigenous so I feel uncomfortable or I feel uncomfortable. So that is the language; that is the rhetoric. I don't want to teach that because I don't want to make a mistake, I don't want to be offensive, I don't want to do it wrong. And I would say no. No, no, no, no, no. That is not an acceptable response. And when I say principals are everything, they are the ones to have those challenging conversations with staff when the work isn't happening. Like we ask children every single day, many many [*sic*] times a day to do things that make them feel uncomfortable. All the time – speak in front of people you don't know, go speak with

people you are not friends with, go work with this group, stand up in front of class and present on this, do an essay on this topic you know nothing about, write an article on something really personal and bare your soul to me. Like we ask kids every day to do things that make them feel uncomfortable. So as educators, we need to go there and do that work. So being nervous or uncomfortable is not a good enough excuse for me. Do it anyways. It is urgent. It is expected and it is necessary.

"Don't forget the land thingy". Repeatedly, throughout all of the interviews, participants spoke about the practice of land acknowledgement statements. Land acknowledgement statements by settlers were identified by participants as "absolutely necessary", yet there was a common feeling that they had become somewhat performative. A settler participant recalled working with colleagues preparing for an annual event at their school. They were reviewing the draft program, when a fellow settler colleague commented "oh, don't forget the land thingy." Her colleagues nodded along and printed out a copy of the formal statement as they quickly made notes on phonetic spellings. This participant reflected on the experience "I just, I contributed to making that [land acknowledgement] so trite."

A settler participant spoke of what could be considered as the hypocrisy that exists in a reconciliation discourse taking place in settler colonial contexts, "You know people are making Treaty or Land acknowledgements but then it's on to singing 'O Canada' and then go on with your day. There's a colonial conversation like there. But why won't we have it." Statements along this line of thinking reiterated the need for an ongoing commitment and demonstration of what settlers should be doing to address inequities and oppression, alongside Land Acknowledgement Statements. An Indigenous participant summarized:

> You know I have found myself this past little while when I hear the land acknowledgement statement, I can't, I always hear in my head, okay *and what.* [Long pause]. Cause that's starting to feel like window dressing. Cause if you drive, just here, you see our people suffering and it fucking hurts.

Claiming Indigeneity. Indigenous participants specifically voiced concern about colleagues claiming to be Indigenous. Given the harm that has been imposed on Indigenous peoples as a result of state processes of identity classification, this was an issue that they spoke carefully about, often prefacing it by stating "I'm hesitant to bring this up" or by explaining that they did not want the comment to be taken out of context or construed as them being an authority figure on who could, or could not, claim Indigeneity. The following point by an Indigenous participant summarized the concerns of other Indigenous participants in the project when it comes to people claiming Indigeneity:

> I don't want to shame or add to in-fighting, but again you know we are seeing lots of you know, some people say popcorn *Indians* and you know again its derogatory…But you know people who have say discovered they have a connection, that family connection and it's like that is good, but it's like, that's good I can check the box. And I guess maybe the contempt that you are sensing from me, it is probably this. Like if you are going to and I say these people, but if you are going to identify as Indigenous, we need you then. We need you to, especially the young ones, and there's old ladies who have way more energy and strength than me, and I'm like, I'm in awe of them. But there are some of us who are tired and we do need a younger people to step up. So, if you are claiming your Indigenous heritage, that's great. But now what. What are you going to do

> with that, other than you know look cool, you know, get funding for your education, or whatever, like I don't know there's not a lot of benefits but you know what I mean. 'Cause [*sic*] it's kinda [*sic*] cool to be Indian now, like now it's in….Cause again all of our cultures, doesn't matter which Nation you are from, that collective thinking that's, you've gotta [*sic*] think about the community, not just ourselves.

"We're welcoming of all cultures." Some participants in the project voiced concern over an evasive strategy used by settler educators whereby the celebratory nature of multiculturalism, diversity, and tolerance in the classroom was used as a way to avoid deeper conversations about Indigenous worldviews, culture, and histories. A settler participant recalled interactions which later gave way to disagreements with an established social studies educator who expressed reluctance to incorporate Indigenous content in her class because this teacher did not want to "privilege Indigenous worldviews over other kid's [students] cultures in the class." Another settler participant recalled being met with resistance to the incorporation of Indigenous programming by settler educators under the "you know this line of we're welcoming of all cultures." Similarly, an Indigenous participant voiced "I worry sometimes about it [incorporating Indigenous Education]. You know is it just going to be this parade of culture alongside every other culture."

Discussion

Themes and Subthemes	Description
Chains, Knots, and Threads: Barriers to Education *as* Reconciliation	
Vision and values.	The education system is influenced by the dominant political, economic, and social structures of a society, namely neoliberalism which has added to the pressures already felt by educators.
Political will.	Education *as* reconciliation, and reconciliation more generally speaking, requires political will and a commitment to action.
Poverty and educational outcomes.	The educational achievement and attainment of students, particularly Indigenous students, is hampered by poverty and impoverishment.

	Settler educators often struggle to make connections between this lack of success, poverty, and broader structural violence.
Structures of racism and white privilege in schools.	Anti-Indigenous racism and white privilege have created unsafe environments for Indigenous staff and students. Settler educators struggle in both recognizing and addressing anti-Indigenous racism (and racism more broadly speaking).
Settler Status Quo in Education	
Difficulty acknowledging "what we bring to the table."	Participants highlighted that their identity and social location impacted their roles as educators. However many participants felt that it was not commonplace to acknowledge the ways in which their identity, and the identities of their students, operated in education.
Colonial mindsets.	The education system continues to harm Indigenous students, and results in gross inequities between settlers and Indigenous students. In part this results from the continued dominance of Eurocentric knowledge held by teachers.
Settler ignorance.	This is not always recognized by settler educators. Both new and established teachers often claim ignorance to the issues and injustices facing Indigenous peoples in the settler colonial context.
Settler apathy.	Disinterest, passive resistance, and complacency towards the injustices faced by Indigenous peoples is common among settler educators.
The settler educators' playbook.	Settler educators employ a number of strategies in an attempt to remove themselves from the complicity of settler colonialism, and often to relieve their own guilt.

Table 4. Barriers in the Education System: Summary of Themes and Subthemes

For this group of participants – educators working towards reconciliation, it was imperative to recognize and acknowledge the complicity of the education system. The education system has played, and continues to play, an important role in structuring the relationships between settlers and Indigenous communities in Canada. As the TRC commented, "much of the current state of troubled relations between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Canadians is attributable to educational institutions and what they have taught, or failed to teach, over many generations" (2015c, p. 234).

The settler colonial mesh (Woolford, 2014) that was and continues to be cast over Canadian society has had a direct impact on the education system. Participants in this project described the education system as an inherent part of the *chains* (see Chapter 5) that worked

to oppress Indigenous peoples in this country, with the education system had contributed to manufacturing or at least cementing of the *different worlds* that are occupied by Indigenous peoples and settlers and [destructive] *stories* and a racist, colonial curriculum (see Chapter 5) shared in and through schools. In this way, the education system served as an instrument through which the dominant vision of society was enacted. This vision has moved from notions of the "Indian problem," now to a visioning of reconciliation. The question becomes however, as demonstrated in Chapter 6, what exactly is meant by reconciliation, and how we can more fully dislodge a vision of "Indian problem" and replace it with the "settler problem."

Every participant in this project commented on the ways in which the education system as an instrument of the settler state has damaged the fabric of Canadian society and specifically, had caused harm to Indigenous children and their families. Participants described the education system using terms such as complicit, oppressive, and harmful. As such, the education system has been, and continues to be a site of and for conflict. Indeed, a qualitative research study that interviewed teachers and the parents of Indigenous children in Alberta described schools as "dangerous places" for many Indigenous families (Milne & Wotherspoon, 2020). And yet, despite the myriad of ways that education has functioned as a tool for racism and colonialism, participants in this project felt that recognition of the violence and harm perpetuated against Indigenous peoples at the hands of the education system was not one that was purported by their colleagues. Perhaps mirroring the work of the TRC in its quest for both truth and reconciliation, participants in this project expressed the need to acknowledge the historic and contemporary harms incurred by Indigenous students at the hands of the

education system (i.e., truth); and then work to address these harms within the education system (i.e., reconciliation).

The vision and values of our settler colonial society, as influenced by political, economic, and social structures, were noted by participants as influencing what was possible in terms of reconciliation. The public education system in the Canadian setting operates in and through a neoliberal frame. In its most simplistic form, neoliberalism is an ideology that promotes the extension of the market and the market ethos of *laissez-faire* to all areas of life – including the economy, politics, society (Monbiot, 2016), as well as the education system (Apple, 2011). Neoliberalism relies on market-based relationships to "explain how the world works, or how it should work" (Tuck, 2013, p. 325). Neoliberalism holds individual self-responsibility and social efficiency in high esteem, with a view of the market as operating most efficiently and effectively when it is without government regulation (Lakes & Carter, 2011). Economic deregulation is promoted alongside the retrenchment of welfare policies and the expansion of prisons and other carceral institutions which work together to increase the responsibilization and disciplinary control over marginalized and poor communities (Dafnos, 2010; Wacquant, 2009). Among the many criticisms leveled at neoliberal policies is that it exploits both human and natural resources, privileges private property and ownership over the Commons and in many cases over Brown and Black lives, as recently seen in a number of cases both in Manitoba such as the death of Eishia Hudson (Wilt, 2020) and across North America, and redistributes assets form social welfare to market enterprises (Harvey, 2010; Monbiot, 2016). While many scholars point to neoliberalism as a relatively recent paradigm, Indigenous scholars recognize

neoliberalism and its operation as an extension of settler colonialism (Bargh, 2007; Penehira, Green, Smith, & Aspin, 2014; Tuck, 2013; Walter, 2010).

Neoliberalism has become inextricably linked to what Canadian settler philosopher Charles Taylor defined as the social imaginary – the ways in which large numbers of people imagine their existence (2004). The social imaginary encompasses the "deeper normative notions and images that underlie these expectations" (Taylor, 2007, p. 119). Neoliberalism has become a central underlying component of the social imaginary (Rizvi & Lingard, 2009). Given that neoliberalism (and its precursor classical liberalism), and settler colonialism go hand and hand; it could be suggested that the neoliberal social imaginary has morphed with the settler imaginary (Bell, 2014; Terruhn, 2015) (see Chapter 5). This neoliberal settler imaginary has as a key element what Maori scholar Maria Bargh describes as a "conflict between not wanting to be or appear paternalistic, wanting to be seen to allow people the 'freedom' and 'empowerment' to govern themselves, but at the same time distrusting the abilities of some peoples, particularly Indigenous peoples, to do so" (2007, p. 14). This neoliberal settler imaginary has come to be pervasive in the education system, in its purposes and governance, in settings throughout the world (Rizvi, 2017).

A neoliberal approach works to bring all aspects of education under a market ethos, emphasizing individual efficiencies and standardized measurements as signs of success and failure to achieve deemed as one's own fault (Lakes & Carter, 2011). In the context of a neoliberal order, schools are refigured in a way that aims to produce "highly individualized, responsibilized subjects" (Davies & Bansel, 2007, p. 248), operating in rational ways, who despite being tightly governed, increasingly see themselves as free (Rose, 1999). The neoliberal

foundation of the education system emphasizes a production-line mentality, characterized by conformity and standardized testing and curricula. By recasting the purposes of education in largely economic terms, moral and cultural concerns of education become secondary, or cast away entirely (Rizvi, 2017). And yet, neoliberal policies have only served to increase inequalities and disparities in society, further exacerbating social stratification (Apple, 2011) all the while placing blame on the individual for their circumstances as supposedly resulting from poor choices (Stanford & Taylor, 2013).

Neoliberalism has also been marked by a turn towards discipline and punishment, including within the educational setting with schools themselves as sites of discipline (Lissovoy & Cedillo, 2017; Sellers & Arrigo, 2018). The presence of law enforcement in schools across Canada and the United States has expanded drastically in recent years. “School Resource Officers” (SROs) – fully armed and uniformed police officers – have been a key feature of Manitoba elementary, middle, and high schools within various school divisions starting in 2002 (Public Safety Canada, 2018). Despite community concerns and pressure from local activist groups over issues such as systemic racism and over-policing, in September 2020 the Winnipeg City Council voted 13-3 to renewed the SRO contract between the city and school divisions (Kavanagh, 2020).

The SRO program is rooted in a paradigm of security, discipline, and surveillance, with uneven impacts on Indigenous and racialized students (Madan, 2016; Nolan, 2011; Petteruti, 2011). Given the preponderance of student data doubles – the digital duplicate of student lives captured in data (Raley, 2013) – disciplinary strategies has the potential to further regulate the lives of Indigenous and racialized students through other government systems, such as the child

welfare system. Disciplinary practices including SRO programs also further contribute to the "school to prison pipeline" (Gebhard, 2013; Salole & Abdulle, 2015).

Moreover, neoliberal reform policies in the education system often exclude socio-economic class and culture within new curricular policies and pedagogies (Lakes & Carter, 2011). Research studies focusing on the implementation of neoliberal reform in the education system in Chile (Cavieres, 2011), the United States (Hursh, 2007; Journell, 2011; Tuck, 2013), and Australia and New Zealand (Davies & Bansel, 2007) as examples, demonstrate that the implementation of neoliberal policies works to further disadvantage those students already marginalized within the system. It works to reinforce a notion of meritocratic success (Cavieres, 2011) that fails to account for how students subordinated by socioeconomic class and race receive differential classroom experiences (Journell, 2011; Macleod, 2009). Moreover, pedagogical and curricular approaches that support and are rooted in neoliberalism often work to increase a sense of individualism over social collaboration. In a qualitative study with classroom teachers in the United States working to resist pedagogy that was aligned with neoliberalism, educators also described neoliberal policies and practices as leading to "increased alienation from the learning process, and eroded critical awareness, empathetic citizenship, and democratic participation" (Vassallo, 2013, p. 259).

Much of the literature on neoliberalism centres on globalizing processes at the macro level; while literature on neoliberalism in education is often focused on countries in the global south that have been subject to reforms mandated by international institutions, or the public education system in the United States. However, participants in this project echoed the concerns levied against neoliberalism – citing their experiences as educators in the public

education system, but also their experiences in the post-secondary education setting in which they received their training. As a common thread, they explained that implementing an efficiencies-based models that were individualistic in nature and focused on conformity and standardized testing cannot adequately account for the inequities that already exist in a settler colonial society. They also failed to provide both educators and students with skills in critical thinking and critical awareness. Specifically, in the education system these structural and systemic inequities serve to marginalize Indigenous students, as well as other student groups at risk for school failure (Virone, 2016) and school pushout (youth pressured to leave school by factors inside the school) (Tuck, 2012). These neoliberal-influenced educational systems with their focus on data and metrics, and individualized nature, was not congruent with Indigenous worldviews. Moreover, they offer little opportunity for what has been described by then Justice, and former Senator Murray Sinclair (2014a) as the sacred responsibility of educators to help students come to know where do I come from? Where am I going? Why am I here? and Who am i?

While there is evidence of change in many Canadian jurisdictions, because education falls within provincial and territorial mandates, large-scale reforms remain out of reach. Moreover, there is a lack of political will towards reconciliation more broadly speaking (Talaga, 2020), but also to education more specifically, as evidenced by the MB Provincial government's education review that participants felt only serve to intensify a neoliberal approach to education. The very recent release of the educational review conducted by the MB Provincial Government under a Conservative government seems to signify that a neoliberal model will continue to prevail, given the Committee's emphasis on efficiencies. MB Education Minister

Kelvin Goertzen's meeting with US Education Secretary Betsy DeVos and Texas Senator Ted Cruz during the COVID-19 crisis (Levasseur, 2020; Samphir, 2020) where the MB government was critiqued for its insistence on austerity measures did little to ameliorate concerns that a more neoliberal model of education will be implemented. Anishinaabe scholar and writer Niigaan Sinclair (2021) asserts that *Bill 64, the Education Modernization Act* (Government of Manitoba, 2021), is "a 100 per cent step backwards for Indigenous education… seeking to return to the same top-down, centrally controlled political and cultural ideology that led to the problems Indigenous learners face in the current system." In similar vein to Sinclair (2021), participants in this project expressed their grave concerns that the recommendations of this review would act as a significant barrier to education *as* reconciliation – narrowing educational structures, pedagogy, and curriculum in a way that would accentuate inequities between Indigenous and settler students and reproduce class and racial disparities, marginalize Indigenous knowledge, maintain settler colonial hegemony, and thus limit and perhaps more accurately quash any possibilities for societal reconciliation.

While some participants were explicit in naming neoliberalism, others referred to it only by its characteristics, describing education in this way as premised on a factory or machine mode. They spoke of the challenges that come from decisions being made driven by data, alongside the challenges of standardized testing and measurement approaches, and the problematizing individual students for their failure to achieve specific outcomes, particularly in the case of this project, Indigenous students, shifting responsibility for an individual's welfare from society, onto the individual. Describing neoliberalism's characteristics, without explicitly naming it as such, is not uncommon; like settler colonialism, neoliberalism has a tendency to

operate in ways that are both “invisible and difficult to make sense of” (Davies & Bansel, 2007, p. 247). Neoliberalism operates in diffuse and largely invisible ways, in what has been described as a piecemeal fashion, lessening the chance that people can actively organize resistance (Sklar, 1980, p. 21). Like settler colonialism (Alfred & Corntassel, 2005), neoliberalism is also a shape-shifting phenomenon, malleable and adapting to different contexts and manifest in different ways (Ong, 2006; Rossiter & Wood, 2016). In so doing, neoliberalism becomes assumed as normalized, neutral, and the natural state of being, operating with an air of inevitability and what has been described as a key feature of neoliberalism – namely TINA – or ‘There is No Alternative’ (Harvey, 2010; Hursh, 2017; Monbiot, 2016). In the settler colonial context where bodies of knowledge and ways of being and knowing have been so incredibly marginalized and oppressed, this presents an added challenge, foreclosing any creative opportunities of thinking of other ways of operating, further cemented the idea that TINA.

The subjective experiences of participants point to the constitutive effect of neoliberalism in education within a settler colonial context with some participants describing feelings of complicity in implementing such policies. They explicitly expressed a desire to develop tools that would equip them to challenge this inevitability and resist these “common” neoliberal practices and policies in education, and expressed a desire for leadership within their schools, and within the government, to challenge neoliberal models. However, it is important to acknowledge as American educator David Hursh (2011) has articulated, that educators have been virtually disempowered at every level and so are not adequately equipped to fully challenge the deep inequities facing societies.

Framing neoliberalism as an extension of the most recent configuration of settler colonialism provides an important entry point through which to understand what participants described as the most pressing challenge in their work – namely the pervasive and persistent nature of poverty, and specifically child poverty. Child poverty remains a persistent threat to children in Canada, with the highest child poverty rate in Manitoba (27.9%) (Campaign 2020 Report Card on Child and Family Poverty in Canada, 2020). In Winnipeg, although poverty tends to be geographically concentrated in the inner city, pockets of poverty also exist in Winnipeg's suburbs (Silver & Sjoberg, 2019). Child poverty is the single largest determinant of health (World Health Organization, 2003). As described from the experiences of participants in this project, poverty experienced by students and their families not only reflected a shortage of income, but rather is what has been described as "complex poverty" including not only low income, but also poor housing, poor health, intergenerational trauma, unemployment, social exclusion, and racism (Silver, 2016). Participants shared that meeting the basic needs (i.e., food, shelter, water, safety, security) of students, with particular emphasis on Indigenous students, often came second to teaching.

Reflecting historic and contemporary structures of oppression, child and family poverty is unequally distributed among the population, with children of Indigenous identity most severely affected.[17] Based on the 2016 Census, First Nation children both on and off-reserve experience poverty rates at 53% and 41% respectively, while 25% of Inuit children, and 22% of Métis children experience poverty. These rates present a stark contrast when compared to the

[17] Other groups at risk of living in poverty include women, 2SLGBTTQIA*+ communities, youth, newcomers, racialized groups, as well as those with disabilities (Silver, 2016).

estimate that only 12% of non-Indigenous, non-immigrant, and non-racialized children are exposed to poverty. As such, poverty exists as a manifestation of the violence inherent in the structures of settler colonialism. PACS describes structural violence as a form of violence in which the social structures of society operate in such a way so as harm individuals and prevent them from meeting their basic needs (Galtung, 1969). Structural violence often operates in an invisible, indirect, and insidious nature; and yet its manifestations, such as poverty, exclusion, and inequities are often direct and apparent.

It has been clearly documented that educational achievement is severely and negatively impacted by socioeconomic status – with a clear causal relationship between poverty and low educational outcomes (Silver & Sjoberg, 2019). Data from the Manitoba Centre for Health Policy demonstrates that children living in complex poverty are lacking in their readiness for school at an early age (Polyzoi et al., 2020). While this link between poverty and low educational attainment may be recognized by educators, participants felt that the connection between the impoverishment of children and their families (as a form of structural violence) to low educational outcomes and achievement was not always understood or accepted by other educators, particularly their settler colleagues. Perhaps reflecting the dominant settler (Bell, 2014; Terruhn, 2015) and neoliberal imaginary (Rizvi, 2017) that sees the failure to achieve traditional targets of success (Lakes & Carter, 2011), participants shared that the experience of poverty among Indigenous students and their families was often attributed to individual and family shortcomings and emphasizing individual deficits, rather than systemic inequities and structural violence. It is important to recognize that educators' awareness of poverty and impoverishment would be dependent on the context in which they are teaching. The British

Columbia Teachers' Federation notes that the level of awareness of poverty among teachers in schools situated in middle- and high-income neighbourhoods, and teaching middle and high school grade levels, was significantly lower than those in low-income neighbourhoods and elementary levels (2016). Without an awareness of poverty, of its often hidden nature, and importantly of processes of impoverishment, addressing complex poverty becomes challenging, with interventions targeted not on removing systemic barriers, but rather more superficial in nature.

Alongside the emphasis on neoliberalism and complex poverty, participants highlighted the pervasive nature of anti-Indigenous racism in the educational setting, and its embedded nature of everyday life at school. Educational settings and academia generally speaking are dominated by personnel who are ignorant and hostile to Indigenous peoples (Tuhiwai Smith, Tuck, & Yang, 2019, p. 7). Participants in this project shared that systemic and causal racism, overt and covert, exist in classrooms and in their schools, experienced not only by Indigenous students and by their families, but also by Indigenous educators and school personnel. The culmination of this systemic and casual racism results in an unsafe school environment and an inequitable school culture for Indigenous students and personnel. A recent report highlights the unsafe nature of the school environment, and the way that educators' unexamined white privilege and racism serve to compound the experience of socioeconomic and other barriers that impede Indigenous students' attendance in school and thus further limiting the potential of Indigenous students' success (Fowler, 2020).

Participants in this project highlighted racism as anti-Indigenous. However the experiences of participants, including their frustrations over the ways in which racism is

individualized, as well as the lack of understanding particularly among both educators and administrators of what constitutes racism and exclusion extends to the experiences of other racialized groups in the educational setting (Amjad, 2018; Dei, 2006; Fletcher & Hogarth, 2018). Participants' narratives pointed to the ways that racist bahaviours, actions, and outcomes have been codified in society in that they exist as 'democratic racism', and have served to normalize racism and allowing injustices and inequities to exist as common sense (Henry et al., 2010). Schools are no exception to these racial inequities. Denial and avoidance of issues surrounding racism in the educational setting were commonplace among white settler colleagues (Lund, 2006). The refusal of educators, as well as political leaders and policy makers to acknowledge the roots of racism, and its impacts on BIPOC including students remains as one of the most pressing challenges facing society (Dei, 2009).

Multiple participants in this project shared that they struggled to address racism among their colleagues. Anti-racism activism and practice has taken centre stage in recent times in part owing to the work of social movements and social media movements, including those such as #BlackLivesMatter and #EbonyInTheIvory, but more specifically to the settler colonial context #ShutDownCanada, #IdleNoMore, #SettlerCollector, and #LandBack to name a few. However, for many settler participants adopting an anti-racist lens to their work was not something that they had been adequately prepared for. Anti-racism is both a practical and theoretical framework that "recognizes the dominance of white people and Eurocentric knowledge over people of colour and non-European values and knowledge" (Centre for Race and Culture, 2004). It is an active process to eliminate racism by changing systems, structures, policies, practices, and attitudes, with the goal of redistributing power and building equity. Critical race theory

offers an important vantage point through which to challenge racism and racial ideology as being systemically entrenched in society through not only laws and policies but also enhanced through educational and cultural institutions (Bonilla-Silva, 2013). However, both critical race theory and anti-racist practices, policies, and frameworks (Lawrence & Dua, 2005) have been critiqued for the failure to account for the lived experiences and perspectives of Indigenous peoples. Thus approaches to anti-racist practice in the Canadian context that encourage white people to critical examine their own privilege and role in the disempowerment of racialized groups (Dei, 2009; Pauchulo, 2013), often fail to do so in a way that recognizes the complexities of Indigenous-settler relations (Lawrence & Dua, 2005).

Whiteness and white privilege are dominant in educational structures (Leonardo, 2009; Lund & Carr, 2010). Participants in this project detailed the influence of white privilege on their positionality, hiring practices within schools, and the social location of their students. And yet echoing the dominant literature in this area (Carr, 2016; McIntosh, 1988), participants also noted that acknowledging white supremacy, and using terminology such as white privilege was not commonplace among their colleagues and instead was often resisted or avoided.

The systemic racism and white privilege that is built into the education system in the settler colonial context is accentuated by an inequity in hiring practices that results in a lack of Indigenous representation at all levels of the educational system. A survey conducted in 2019 of the six school divisions in Winnipeg found that only two of the 54 trustees self-identify as Indigenous, and only one of the school divisions has Indigenous representation on the Board (Newcomer Education Coalition, 2020). Moreover, based on the assertion that schools must be

representative of the populations they serve, the Report believes that a shortage of at least 600 Indigenous educators exists in Winnipeg alone (Wong, 2020).

The issue of representation is even more nuanced when we are to consider the barriers that exist for women. While women make up the majority of educators in Canada, representation at the level of administration and leadership remains elusive (Robinson et al., 2019). This is even more accentuated for Indigenous women, as well as other visible minorities, in both educators and leadership positions (Robinson et al., 2019; White, 2010). Indigenous representation at all levels is an issue of equity, but it is especially key if we are to centre Indigenous knowledge systems. A lack of Indigenous representation means Indigenous students and their families do not see themselves represented in the teaching staff, and even less, the administration; nor do they see themselves as represented in the curriculum. Employment equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) policies have become increasingly popular in academia and in human resources practices to redress the underrepresentation of marginalized groups in other sectors of society yet according to a recent report by the Winnipeg Indigenous Executive Circle, only one of the six school divisions in Winnipeg has an equity plan in place (CBC News, 2020). Moreover, it is necessary to ask to what extent they will be successful when the environment in which Indigenous (and other racialized groups) work in and in this case teach in remains unsafe and when Indigenous knowledges, worldviews, and identities remain marginalized, oppressed and excluded in dominant society.

As described above, settler colonialism's interlocking forms of oppression include neoliberalism, impoverishment, racism, and white privilege and white supremacy. These structures are maintained and sustained in through power asymmetries and inequities that

structure our social worlds and operate at the micro level of the settler colonial mesh. In this way:

> …[I]t is not simply the master narratives of the official curriculum or the controlling ideologies of state examination or capitalist interests of the textbook industry that are at stake in the critical classroom; it is also the people there, the bodies in the classroom, who carry knowledge within themselves that must be engaged, interrupted, and transformed. Moreover these bearers of received knowledge do not come with one story of about the past, a common understanding of the present, and a shared vision of the future. It is a divided knowledge (Jansen, 2009, pp. 258-259)

At the heart of the education system is the relationship between teachers and learners (Robinson, 2016). Educators play a critical role in any society – they impart values, skills, and knowledge and influence the attitudes and perspectives of both the students they work with, and of the wider community (Carr, 2016, p. 64). In the Canadian context, where education is considered the key to reconciliation, that role becomes even more critical. Teachers do not simply impart or transmit their knowledge onto students – "they frame the context in which the context is debated, developed, understood, and problematized" (Carr, 2016, p. 64). As they work alongside students, producing and constructing knowledge, they are enmeshed in which ways in which students learn, as well as how students experience learning, knowledge production, and schooling. As such, identity and identity formation, while always in flux, are fundamental. Whether consciously or unconsciously, the identities and social locations of both educators and students, play a pivotal role (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009; Lund & Carr, 2010; Yancy, 2014).

A teacher's professional identity stands at the core of the teaching profession, providing a framework through which teachers "construct their own ideas of 'how to be', 'how to act' and 'how to understand' their work and their place in society" (Sachs, 2005, p. 15). It impacts the knowledge that is "deemed 'worthy' of curricular inclusion and the relational conditions and practices through which teaching and learning become possible" (Madden, 2016, p. 51). For this group of participants, both Indigenous and settler, their commitment to education *as* reconciliation permeated both their social and professional identities, including their approach to knowledge, to teaching, and to their interactions with students and the wider community. It is necessary to acknowledge however, the interaction between the neoliberal settler imaginary, the social identities, and professional identities of settler educators (Rizvi, 2017).

Some participants expressed concern over what they felt was an expectation of neutrality in the classroom and in their roles as teachers. The emphasis on neutrality in the classroom aligns with the dominant neoliberal approach to education (Hansen, Phelan, & Qvortrup, 2015). However neutrality is neither possible nor desirable in a context of teaching for social justice (Kelly & Brandes, 2001). Moreover, given that a large majority of educators in the MB context (and indeed across Canada) are white settlers, neutrality is possible only when one surrenders to destructive myths of the Other. American historian of race policy in the US Ibram X. Kendi (2019) notes:

> There is no neutrality in the racism struggle...One either allows racial inequities to persevere, as a racist, or confronts racial inequities, as an antiracist. There is not in between safe space of 'not racist.' The claim of 'not racist' neutrality is a mask for racism (p. 9).

Neutrality presumes the settler colonial context and the asymmetrical power relationships that characterize that context are a natural way of being. Neutrality must be countered by acknowledging and then explicitly resisting the legacy of paternalism, however benevolent, (Regan, 2010, p. 4) and social control – both at the institutional and individual level – that has characterized settler colonial relations. It means problematizing and resisting approaches that see Indigenous peoples as "ours" as one settler participant repeatedly referenced. Moreover, it means challenging a view that sees Indigenous students in need of saving, as opposed to dismantling the barriers in their way. The words of Nigerian-American writer Teju Cole writing on the white saviour industrial complex have resonance to the settler colonial context in that it becomes not about justice or challenging inequities, but rather "is about [white people] having a big emotional experience that validates privilege" (Cole, 2012). Teaching as reconciliation in a settler colonial context that is dominated by inequities and power asymmetries, and is politically charged makes this emphasis on neutrality even more problematic and in essence amounts to an approach that avoids any disruption to the Eurocentric curriculum and pedagogy (Battiste, 2013; Marom, 2019). Scholars and members of the educational community must explicitly engage in acknowledging our social identities and social locations (Carr, 2016) and in problematizing our neoliberal settler social imaginary (Hursh, 2011).

Building space in the current education system to centre Indigenous knowledge has the potential for redressing and the harm done by settler colonialism and the ongoing domination of Eurocentric knowledge systems. However, it is crucial creating space for Indigenous knowledges, cultures, and worldviews is not conceptualized as an "add and stir" approach that has plagued other academic fields. Such an approach does not help students who have been

marginalized in society find the awareness or the means to overcome the root causes of their oppression (Battiste, 1998; Cummins, 1986).

The continued privileging of Eurocentric bodies of knowledge has also contributed the ongoing pervasiveness of setter ignorance. Black American novelist and playwright James Baldwin (1972) wrote “it is certain, in any case, that ignorance, allied with power, is the most ferocious enemy justice can have” (p. 148). Ignorance was also emphasized by Alfred (2009b) who asserts that ” [t]he complete ignorance of Canadian society about the facts of their relationship with Indigenous peoples and the willful denial of historical reality by Canadians detracts from the possibility of any meaningful discussion on true reconciliation” (p. 181). Participants in this project described the pervasive nature of settler ignorance of both the historical and contemporary reality among teacher candidates, recent graduates, as well as among more established educators. Participants demonstrated the power of settler ignorance and its role in maintaining the settler status quo, reflecting the notion that “ignorance has been used to structure Canada’s relations with Aboriginal Peoples for hundreds of years” (Godlewska et al., 2010, p. 436).

Colonial history and our settler colonial presence has manifested itself into our educational curricula (Butler, Ng-A-Fook, Vaudrim-Charette, & McFadden, 2015). In Chapter 5, participants shared how their own schooling had contributed to destructive stories of Indigenous peoples, through both a null and racist curriculum as well as a hidden curriculum. The destructive stories often employed tropes that refer to Indigenous peoples as “savages” and “uncivilized” (for more information, see Chapter 5) and have made their way into the dominant curricula and pedagogies. Mi'kmaq scholar and activist Marie Battiste (1998)

describes racism as a "staple of European research that frames much of the discourse on Aboriginal peoples in school texts. Through these strategies Eurocentric research has manufactured the physical and cultural inferiority of Indigenous peoples" (p. 21). The field of curriculum continues to "absorb, silence, and replace the non-white other, perpetuating white supremacy and settlerhood" (Tuck & Gaztambide-Fernández, 2013, p. 73). For years, Indigenous leaders and communities have been active in trying to revise the curriculum. Historian Mary Jane McCallum from Munsee Delaware Nation (2020) describes work by the Indian and Métis Committee of the Welfare Council from 1961 to document and challenge content that was patronizing and degrading towards Indigenous peoples, and call for reform to curricula content about Indigenous peoples and history that "deal with Indian life written with accuracy and sympathetic treatment" (*Indian and Métis 7th Annual Conference*, 1961).

The remnants of this colonial curricula and of paternalistic and degrading content remain. Curriculum works to maintain dominant knowledge systems, including settler identities (Tupper, 2011) and through curriculum, stories, myths, and anecdotes, bolsters the neoliberal settler imaginary (Hursh, 2011). And despite improvements in curriculum, we must recognize that the Canadian curriculum, by and large "still tends to speak from an imaginal space derived from and created by the cognitive habits or Europe" (Chambers, 1999, p. 142). As such, it is important to acknowledge the widespread ignorance that exists as a result of the absence of knowledge and of not being educated sufficiently, and in a meaningful way, about settler colonialism in Canada (Harrison, 2009) and the lack of historical knowledge and the deep historical roots of social conflict in Canada (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015c, p. 8). It is also important to acknowledge the misinformation that was communicated

through public education for generations about Indigenous peoples (Kennedy, 2015; Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015c, p. 294) and the need to both unlearn and relearn.

However, claims among both new and established educators of "not knowing," particularly in light of the work of the TRC to document the IRSS, were increasingly met with disbelief by participants who were beginning to question if it really is a question of not knowing. Scholars have articulated settler ignorance, and in particular white, settler willful ignorance as an epistemological stance; as a tool through which settlers (and in this case settler educators) can work to resist meaningful engagement with the foundational importance of understanding Canada's settler colonial past and present (Schaefli, 2018; Tupper, 2011). Ignorance in this sense then is deliberate and strategic. It is inherent in both reproducing and legitimating colonial relations of dominance (Schaefli, 2018). The deliberate and conscientious erasure of the injustices that Indigenous peoples face as a result of settler colonialism alongside the systemic marginalization of Indigenous worldviews, histories, and knowledges become claimed under systems of ignorance. This ignorance takes on a degree of social power as it is made banal and natural (May, 2006, p. 109) becomes a *modus operandi* in the settler colonial context, and thus beyond critique and re-imagination.

While settler ignorance is most definitely a crucial part of the settler colonial context, it interacts with, and operates alongside settler apathy, passive resistance, and disinterest, and at times settler denial. A 2019 survey of more than 5,700 people in Canada found settler support for reconciliation is waning, when compared to a similar survey conducted in 2016 (Andrew-Gee, 2019; Environics Institute for Survey Research, 2020). This included among items such as the provision of clean drinking water in reserve communities, consultation about resource

development, and equal education funding. Moreover, while 87 per cent of settlers supported mandatory material in school curriculums about the IRSS in 2016, by 2019 that number had drastically declined to 66 per cent (Environics Institute for Survey Research, 2016, 2020). While quantitative measures, such as this survey offer only a snapshot with little explanation of the root causes or the complexity of such views, when combined with the ongoing inequities and division around issues of Indigenous sovereignty and in light of the findings of this study, they do paint a dangerous picture that settler support for reconciliation may be waning.

Related to notions of settler ignorance and apathy, participants expressed concern with some of the actions, strategies, and discursive maneuvers employed by their settler colleagues (and admittedly by the settler participants themselves) that work together to ensure that education *as* reconciliation remains out of reach, and ultimately contribute to maintaining and defending the settler status quo. Taken together, these tactics and strategies form a playbook of sorts, reflecting what has been referred to in the literature as 'moves to innocence' – the set of "strategies to remove involvement in and culpability for systems of domination" (Mawhinney, 1998, p. 17). These moves to innocence also encompass what Sherene Razack's (1998) describes as a 'race to innocence' – the fundamental belief that we cannot be involved in the subordination of others (p. 14).

Moves to innocence are often employed by settlers when they are inconvenienced or uncomfortable with Indigenous assertions of sovereignty (Rotz, Rück, & Carlton, 2020). Work from criminology also has resonance in this context. American sociologist and criminologist Gresham Sykes and American sociologist David Matza (1957) outline a series of techniques of neutralization used by individuals to rationalize or justify a criminal act. Borrowing from this

work, white South African sociologist and criminologist Stanley Cohen (2001) explores how such techniques of neutralization set the foundation for a "dulled passive acceptance of violence" (p. 52) by bystanders (i.e., settler society) as well as various strategies of evasion and denial around human rights violations. Moves to innocence act as a sense of relief in the face of settler guilt and shame and to remove settlers from a sense of complicity in settler colonial relations (Tuck & Yang, 2012, p. 9), thus indicating some sense of knowing that the society in which they live is inherently inequitable and oppressive to certain groups. These moves to innocence also mean that settlers can act in way that does not require them to give up any of the material conditions, privilege, and importantly land that comes with being a settler on Indigenous land (Tuck & Yang, 2012, pp. 10-24).

Some of the strategies identified by participants in this project had some resonance with the moves to innocence employed in society more broadly speaking. This includes the strategies such as Tokenism and Claiming Indigeneity (or what Tuck and Yang (2012) referred to as Settler Nativism), which have as a common thread the attempt to deflect a settler identity (Tuck & Yang, 2012, pp. 10-13). Others highlighted the superficial nature that activism can take specific to settler colonial society and the performative nature of a commitment to reconciliation such as the reconciliation checklist and "Don't Forget the Land Thingy." Other strategies were more specific to their roles as teachers in the education system. This includes a relatively common practice of holding lowered expectations, or lowering the bar for Indigenous students; claims that "I Can't Teach That" where settler educators cite being unable to teach certain content as it relates to Indigenous peoples often out of respect; the claim that "there's no Indigenous kids in this class" with the assumption that Indigenous education only applies in

such circumstances; alongside the idea that Indigenous education, worldviews, or cultures should not be promoted to the exclusion of other cultures because "we're welcoming of all cultures." Finally, there is the interrelated assumption that Indigenous education only amounts to difficult knowledge, and to pain and suffering of Indigenous peoples. Employing these moves often gave the impression that settlers had values that aligned with reconciliation and respect for Indigenous knowledge and education. And yet, these moves and the actions that characterized them were rooted in Eurocentric beliefs, paternalism, racism and privilege, destructive stories, and at times a fetishization of Indigenous peoples and worldviews, alongside the white gaze. It allows settler educators to perform education for reconciliation, without being disruptive or considering the obligations that should accompany education *as* reconciliation. Exposing the playbooks utilized by educators can work to counter the strategies and to advance more equitable relationships between Indigenous peoples and settlers (Rotz et al., 2020). The challenge becomes how best to encourage settler educators from the practice of utilizing moves from the settler playbook and instead move towards acts that can serve to unsettle that innocence.

Summary

This chapter highlights that the education system inclusive of its structures, policies, spaces, practices, and curricula, works in a way that continues to harm Indigenous students. Indigenous students then must work to resist these historic and contemporary injustices. It is a system that is characterized by gross inequities among students, particularly with reference to this project, between Indigenous students and white settler students. The settler colonial society in which Indigenous youth live has a significant limiting factor on their ability to succeed in school. Yet as

the narratives of participants suggest, it can be surmised that not all settler educators (or the settler educational system more broadly speaking) have made the explicit connections made between the plight of Indigenous students and the context in which they live, demonstrating the way that settler colonialism works to "cover its tracks," (Veracini, 2011). The lack of acknowledgement of the structural violence and systems in place that serve to harm Indigenous students and impede their potential for success.

This chapter explores the various barriers in place at the structural level that limit the capacity for reconciliation through education. This includes neoliberalism, and lack of political commitment, poverty, as well as racism and white privilege in schools. The findings also demonstrate the importance of understanding the ways in which the social worlds of educators – including their understandings of settler colonialism and reconciliation – impact the potential for education *as* reconciliation. The pervasiveness of a neoliberal, colonial knowledge system (including an emphasis on objectivity and neutrality), settler ignorance, apathy, as well as moves by settlers to remove themselves from complicity in settler colonialism dampens the potential for more equitable relations between Indigenous peoples and settlers.

Chapter 8. Findings Part IV: Doing the Work Towards Education *as* Reconciliation

> Education is what got us here, and education is what will get us out.
>
> - Then Justice, now Senator Murray Sinclair (2016)

Introduction

For participants in this project, education was viewed not as a means of achieving reconciliation (education *for* reconciliation) but rather as a form of reconciliation itself (education *as* reconciliation). This chapter will review the findings including: i) Undoing the Knots; ii) Education *as* Reconciliation; and iii) Building Blocks to Breaking the Settler Colonial Chains. In a departure from the format of the previous three chapters, findings from the project will be woven together and presented in dialogue with the literature. Recommendations from the findings will be presented with implications for policy, and as well as educational practice. These recommendations also include a number of practical actions that educators (specifically settler educators) can take in their work towards reconciliation all based on the advice from and experience of research participants. Some of these recommendations are presented in a visual format, based on the suggestions from participants who explained that they and their colleagues often look to social media for a sense of community and support in their activism and the suggestion from a settler participant that there was need for "like a how-to guide, a reaffirmation of sorts of the road you need to take."

Undoing the Knots

Participants expressed an ongoing commitment to work within the settler colonial education system and within the reconciliation discourse to enact social change. This theme explores how participants, in their roles as educators, worked to undo the reconciliation knot.

The language of transformation. Across the country, educational institutions from kindergarten to post-secondary levels, have embraced the work of the TRC though to varying extents (Kabatay & Johnson, 2019). As such the Canadian educational landscape (inclusive of policies, curricula, and practices) working towards reconciliation is scattered, lacking connections, and fragmented. The lack of substantial changes perpetuates and fosters conditions which breed settler ignorance and apathy, and work to maintain the setter status quo. In Manitoba specifically, there have been a number of critiques about the lack of progress, namely the continued lack of Indigenous representation among educators and leadership (Newcomer Education Coalition, 2020), the pervasiveness of anti-Indigenous racism (Romanow, 2020), the lack of substantial change to the Manitoba curriculum (Kabatay & Johnson, 2019), and the continued barriers for Indigenous children and their families living in complex poverty (Auditor General Manitoba, 2020; Silver & Sjoberg, 2019), the cumulative result of which is that the province is "missing the mark…falling flat" in closing the educational gap for Indigenous students (Hatherly, 2018).

Education *as* reconciliation has been framed in literature, practice, and activism around notions of decolonizing and Indigenizing. And it is crucial to acknowledge that Indigenous leaders and communities have worked to transform spaces, the academy, curricula, pedagogy, and research to centre Indigenous cultures and knowledge, and have been working towards

this long before it was more mainstream (Battiste, 1998, 2013; Battiste & Barman, 1995; Dion, 2009). The question of Indigenization and decolonization was one that participants in this project struggled with. The majority of participants expressed a reluctance to use language such as Indigenize and decolonize in their narratives. For some participants, this reluctance stemmed from a feeling that "I don't think that decolonization in education will ever happen… I'm not saying impossible but highly improbable" (Indigenous participant). While for others, the reluctance stemmed from a lack of common understanding of what that process can and should entail: "I mean I don't know if my view is the same as my colleague, as other schools, as other divisions, right" (Indigenous participant). Perhaps most commonly however, was a fear that the language of Indigenization and decolonization was being co-opted. Decolonization is not a synonym for diversity and inclusion practices (Albayrak, 2018). Moreover, "it is not a metaphor for what we want to do to improve our societies and schools" (Tuck & Yang, 2012, p. 1). Echoing the work of Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang (2012) who so succinctly assert "decolonization is not a metaphor," an Indigenous participant explained:

> I'm not quite certain people understand the gravity of that language [around decolonization]. I think people use these terms because they think it is language, text or rhetoric that is appropriate to be spoken right. I want to sound like I know what I am talking about when it comes to Indigenous education so these are some of the things that I am going to say. Let's decolonize right. But if I push right, and push someone and say what do you mean by that, and what do you mean by decolonize education, or what do you mean by indigenizing education, what does that look like for you. I don't know if everybody would have a good answer right.

Another Indigenous participant echoed the difficulties that come when using language for which there is no common understanding, and without any follow-up commitment to action:

> Like I'll hear people say let's Indigenize or decolonize or whatever the word might be. And I think like okay but what does that look like and what does that mean and like in day-to-day spaces and in offices and at board meetings and in policy what does that look like for you. And if it doesn't look like anything, then don't you dare [use that language].

Indeed, as Indigenous leaders have so clearly articulated, many of the initiatives undertaken in the name of Indigenizing education, and under the rhetoric of Indigenization and decolonization are in fact initiatives that are just best practices for teaching and research (Battiste & Barman, 1995) and do not necessarily contribute to the movement for self-determination of Indigenous peoples and the return of land and resources. Therefore, the reluctance of participants to use the terms decolonization or Indigenize should not be taken to mean that participants in this project were not committed to these goals, but rather are wary of language and rhetoric. Participants spoke of Indigenous sovereignty and self-determination, and the need to return to and advance Indigenous knowledge systems. As such, their reluctance to use terms such as Indigenize or decolonize is likely in response to the research interaction – the space, the framing of the research questions, as well as the moments that were created between them and myself, as a settler researcher asking questions about their role in a settler colonial system, namely the education system.

Working within the system. All of the participants in this project envisioned themselves as working within the educational system in a settler colonial context in a way that could enact

education *as* reconciliation. Métis scholar Adam Gaudry and settler scholar Danielle Lorenz (2018) describe the challenges facing Canadian post-secondary institutions as they attempt to enact the TRC's Calls to Action (2015e) and work to ethically engage with both Indigenous communities and Indigenous knowledge systems – namely to Indigenize their institution. While their attention is focused on post-secondary institutions, the work has resonance here. Gaudry and Lorenz (2018) outline multiple different pathways to the process and suggest an understanding of Indigenization as existing along a spectrum – from 'Indigenous inclusion' at one end of the continuum (focusing primarily on increasing the number of Indigenous students to the dominant culture); to 'reconciliation indigenization' in the middle ground whereby indigenization is centred between Indigenous and Canadian ideals and norms; to 'decolonial Indigenization' at the opposite end of the spectrum (Gaudry & Lorenz, 2018). 'Decolonial Indigenization,' the most transformative end of the spectrum has a vision of fundamentally transforming knowledge production as a result of more equitable relationships between settler and Indigenous societies (Gaudry & Lorenz, 2018).

Participants in this project – Indigenous and settlers alike – veered towards 'reconciliation Indigenization' to describe their goals and vision for their work, signaling as was described in Chapter 6, that reconciliation was a long journey, with much more work to be done. Such an approach has as a key feature the creation of a "new, broader consensus on debates such as what counts as knowledge, how should Indigenous knowledges and European-derived knowledges be reconciled, and what types of relationships academic institutions should have with Indigenous communities" (Gaudry & Lorenz, 2018, p. 219). This middle ground has resonance among many educational institutions in the Canadian setting, who have rhetorically

advocated for and claimed to adopt such an approach. However, in practice the overwhelming majority of efforts under this umbrella of action most closely align to Indigenous inclusion – simply adding more Indigenous peoples to a particular setting – without any consideration of or attempt at broader efforts of structural change (Gaudry & Lorenz, 2018; Tuhiwai Smith et al., 2019, p. 8). In this way, such colonial institutions may be employing their own 'move to innocence' – working to give the impression of Indigenization, inclusion, equity, and reconciliation, in a way that does not transform the broader structures of oppression. Such an approach can described as "mainstreaming, dispersing, infusing, or showing up white privilege by keeping it firmly in positions of power (Tuhiwai Smith et al., 2019, p. 8). Working within western-dominated, Eurocentric colonial systems such as the education system creates a new and multilayered challenges for Indigenous peoples, yet "creating safe places is often a practical response to isolation and marginalization" within institutions and settler colonial systems (Tuhiwai Smith et al., 2019, p. 7).

Education *as* Reconciliation

In spite of the many barriers, participants recognized the potential role of education as a means to transform society, through pedagogy, deepening of knowledge, and the shaping of minds of students (Tuhiwai Smith et al., 2019, p. 6). Namely, participants spoke about the need to ensure that Indigenous Education is centred by means of a provincially-mandated curriculum, the need to improve the educational success of Indigenous students', and the importance of centring Indigenous worldviews, pedagogies, histories, knowledges, and cultures. Taken together, these actions could work to contribute in part to more equitable relationships

between Indigenous peoples and settlers. Participants in this project affirmed, as the TRC (2015a) did, that education is the "key to reconciliation" (p. 117).

Provincially-mandated curriculum. School curricula (alongside the curriculum of teacher education) mediates how students think and see themselves as citizens (Tupper & Cappello, 2008), navigating through historic and contemporary settler-Indigenous relationships. Every participant in this project asserted, without probing, that a provincially-mandated Indigenous Education curriculum would serve as an important starting point to reconciliation, to ensuring Indigenous student success, and to creating more meaningful spaces for Indigenous education more broadly speaking. An Indigenous participant explained that a provincial document could help counter settler ignorance:

> But as far as documents with outcomes, like you know we have your English Language Arts curriculum, right. We have mathematics, right. We need Indigenous education. There was the old Native Studies document that's from, gosh, I can't even remember when that came out. It has not been updated in years. But the big ideas in that, the main understandings are still important. It's just like in math you know, you need to know multiplication. In the Native Studies document you need to know about traditional land-based knowledge and stuff like that. But the problem is because that document says Native Studies, people won't use it. You know and I think we need to have a really, something more clear for teachers, you know this is how you do x right. They need step-by-step. Because really *you don't know what you don't know* [emphasis by participant].

Participants – Indigenous and settler participants alike – viewed a mandated curriculum on Indigenous Education as a necessary starting point with which to challenge the systemic

privileging of Eurocentric knowledge, to counter the lack of knowledge of Canada's past, to challenge destructive stories of Indigenous peoples, which would in turn benefit settlers and Indigenous students, albeit in different ways. It was important for participants that this curriculum be mandated, as opposed to voluntary and presented such a way that "all lessons must integrate Indigenous content, not just this a couple of hours here and there, but in a deep way. That's how I want to see it" (Indigenous participant). An Indigenous participant shared:

> I would like there to be a provincial strategy that brings Indigenous Education targeting the success and support, the unique success and support needed for Indigenous youth. I mean this would benefit other kids too right. This work must be mandated. There cannot be a choice here.

Moreover, every participant felt that Indigenous Education should not be offered as a stand-alone approach, but rather should be woven into every other provincial curriculum document and every other subject and activity within the school environment. Participants offered multiple examples:

> It's just valuing that this is something that we need to do that is across the curriculum. It's not an ELA or a social studies, it's Physical Education, it's about artistry, it's about music, it's math, it's ELA, it's science, it's everything. It's just allowing that perspective to kind of go through (Indigenous participant).

> Or taking a look at how we are integrating Indigenous knowledge into course like Culinary Arts, like have the teacher talk about Feasting and bringing in Elders and talking

about how to prepare the food in a good way and what that looks like (Indigenous participant).

So you want to teach about the land, these are the things you can teach about this you know, these are the Medicines, you know the Medicines are all plants… so how to incorporate Indigenous perspectives. That's what teachers *need to know* [emphasis by participant]. So when I would teach science and we talked about plants. And then I would talk about why First Nations peoples laid tobacco down by the plant. And I said, where do you think that came from? Why? So I'd say look at what tobacco is, what it's meant for, it sends up prayers right. But what else is it meant for. Well actually the tobacco is acidic so when you pick the plant you add the acidity to it and it helps stimulate the root growth. Bang, there's your connection right. But the problem is right now you have all these isolated examples of people doing that. But it would be wonderful if in all these other subjects, in science documents, or math, you could actually make those connections for teachers (Indigenous participant).

Participants also emphasized what could be the emancipatory nature of the inclusion of a provincially-mandated Indigenous Education curriculum through which they could begin to resist and challenge the dominant neoliberal framework of education, and of settler society. An Indigenous participant shared her hope that through teaching, she should could contribute to the development of "just and equitable society with different ways of knowing all through education. Now that's reconciliation." For a settler participant in the project, Indigenous

Education could potentially play an important advocacy role for students. In the context of discussing Indigenous Education, this settler participant explained:

> Education can be more than just this knowledge filling type role that there is this emancipatory, or can be emancipatory kind of quality of education. And about encouraging others to see that potential, to find who they are, and to encourage them to take up their own-, to be more vocal, and to support them in doing that in this ongoing struggle.

A settler participant advocated for the need for an ongoing commitment to Indigenous education across the curriculum, but also realized that any time programs become formalized or bounded as such, they run into inherent problems:

> So I think positioning it that we are not just plunking in these kind of approaches in education that are just kind of an additive thing, that we are learning from Indigenous scholars, Indigenous Knowledge Keepers and kind of keeping that ongoing. I think anytime it comes in a box, or a set program, there is always an inherent problem that it is never really good enough because it is not reflecting who the audience is.

An Indigenous participant's description of a mandated "Indigenous Education curriculum as fluid and living… capturing diverse voices and lived experiences and rooted in our knowledges and histories and ways of being" could potentially guard against some of the challenges identified by the settler participant with one-size-fits-all approaches.

Changes to a curriculum often result from the convergence of a number of factors – political advocacy, work in academia, and public discourse (McGregor, 2017); it also requires what can be complex and lengthy partnerships and negotiation with communities, teachers,

teacher-education programs, universities, and policy makers. In the context of Indigenous Education models – the meaningful engagement and leadership of Indigenous communities, Elders and Knowledge Keepers, as well as youth and their families – are necessary and also demand significant time, resources, and attention. However, as identified by participants in this project, curricular change is absolutely necessary and is an urgent matter demanding our attention.

Creating space for Indigenous cultures and identities in the curricula and in school. The TRC's Calls to Action (2015e) articulated the need to ensure education involves curricula that will provide an accurate account of the historic and contemporary experiences of Indigenous peoples in Canada, including the root causes of violence against Indigenous peoples and outline the necessity of curricula changes that honour Indigenous knowledge systems and highlight Indigenous contributions. In order to build equity in the educational system and ensure the success of Indigenous students marginalized and alienated in and through traditional education practices, participants echoed the TRC's Calls to Action (2015e), and highlighted the need for a culturally responsive curriculum (Gay, 2018) and pedagogies (Johnson & Levitan, 2020; Ragoonaden & Mueller, 2017). Participants highlighted the instrumental role of creating space for Indigenous identities, cultures,[18] and languages in school curricula (Castagno & Brayboy, 2008) and in the school environment.

At its core, this requires the centring of Indigenous ontologies and epistemologies that highlight notions of interconnectedness, healing, the revitalization and reclamation of cultural

[18] During these discussions, many participants used terms such as culture (and cultural practices), worldview, beliefs, and identity interchangeably.

values (e.g., ceremony, balance, spirituality, family) and relationality – with people, with the land, with the cosmos, and with ideas (Battiste & Youngblood Henderson, 2000; Lawrence, 2010; Thunderbird Partnership Foundation, 2012; Wilson, 2008). An Indigenous participant shared that she considered creating space for Indigenous cultures, worldviews, and identity a key part of her role and explained:

> … we need to make spaces to promote and to show and to ensure that families and kids [students] know that I value and we value their Indigenous identity and students and their experiences just as much as I do curriculum. That we value ceremony, and Indigenous language and Indigenous content just as much as I value academic learning and that the two things are interchangeable. It is also about articulating in as many spaces as possible that Indigenous peoples had ways of knowing and learning and being very successfully prior to colonization and attempting as often as possible for learning in spaces that is conducive to those ways of life. And I think from the words you use, to what you enforce in your building, to curriculum knowledge, to ceremony, to cultural and Indigenous languages programs, to professional learning opportunities for staff, to procedures and overarching principles and strategic plans that you need to make space for Indigenous ways of life. In all of those spots and spaces. What that would do for our kids, for our communities, it is so immense.

This notion of creating space was highlighted by another Indigenous participant drew the following diagram:

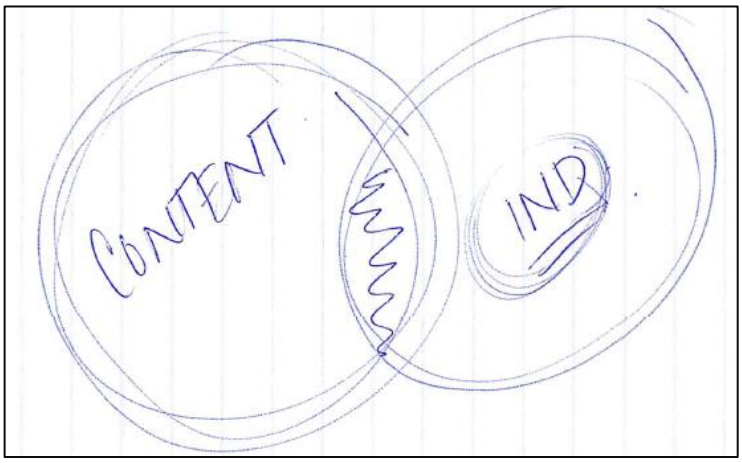


Figure 4. Culture and Curriculum

She went on to explain:

> So when I think about Indigenous students, you think about this sphere [on the left] being content and this sphere [on the right] being the actual education of our Indigenous youth. So sometimes there is overlap, but not all the time. And for me, you know, this, this piece [Indigenous youth on the right] is *so so* important [emphasis by participant]. And this has to do with content and curriculum but importantly it's about identity and supports and equity and levelling the playing field. And looking at systems and policy and structure and so when I say that I don't think we are moving fast enough it's because there is lots of work to do. You know. And I believe that if we do what we need to do then this is possible, the success. Because there is not a thing wrong with these kids [students]. There is not a thing wrong with our kids. There is just not. Nothing wrong with them. And this could work for non-Indigenous kids.

An Indigenous participant echoed the importance of culture and identity in the educational system, and shared the importance of what she called the “culture curriculum”:

> We need to take a look at how we are giving kids access to cultural opportunities during the school day. And I am a big advocate for culture and language and Ceremony, not being an extracurricular activity. I find that to be very offensive. Like drumming as a club right. We need to make space for those things to happen during the school day with credit given, not just as an extracurricular activity.

Similarly, an Indigenous participant rhetorically asked:

> If you are committed to reconciliation, where is your school or school division making spaces for culture and ceremony. And not to force it on children and families but to say we value this and we have taken the time to do this work together with you, and it is here if you want it. You know. Taking a look at other opportunities that you might use to make space for curricular enhancement or knowledge right. Doing curriculum knowledge side-by-side cultural knowledge and having kids understand that you view both as equally as valid. But yet, one of those isn’t written in curriculum and it’s not for credit, urgh. You know this is talking about what we as a school believe to be important, that innately speaks to what you believe as a school, and as a society.

This strength and pride in identity was key to reconciliation for so many of the participants. An Indigenous participant shared:

> From what we say and the words we use and how we articulate our value and what we value is very important. So for kids to hear their white teacher say or to have conversations about their language or identity or culture or to say we are learning about

this because and to be able to have a good answer as to why we are learning about Indigenous peoples in Canada. But just the fact that a classroom teachers value Indigenous education, people and cultures is important and how we articulate that value, as well as a school administrator or principal equally. And how they value and articulate that to your staff. Or how you enforce it with your staff. From things like looking at how you can be implementing Indigenous languages in your school, whether you have a language course or class, or program during the school day. Whether you are working with or you have an opportunity for language speakers to come in and work with classroom teachers to integrate language into curricular area. Whether it's putting welcome signs in Indigenous languages in your building. Or taking a look at how you are giving kids access to opportunities to connect with who they are and to their culture during the school day.

The role of schools as sites for Ceremony was highlighted by many participants in this project. Multiple participants referenced the creation of a sweat lodge at R.B. Russell Vocational High School in Winnipeg School Division as a positive example. An Indigenous research participant in the project was instrumental in the journey to build the Sweat Lodge, shared its importance not only to youth, but to the community more generally speaking:

> We embarked, it was a two year journey to build a Sweat Lodge at our school. We were talking about how it would give kids from all these surrounding schools access to Sweat without needing to get on a bus and not be able to do it in the winter because it is a bit more dangerous to travel right. And why shouldn't kids and their families have access to ceremony in the city. And so we went through many protocols and processes, both

> cultural and like health and safety-related to check all of our boxes. So we consulted with staff and community, and importantly with youth. We worked with a number of different Pipe Carriers in the area prior to embarking on this journey and from connecting with those groups of stakeholders to going through all the logistical planning regarding workplace health and safety, to connecting with Lodge Keepers and holding Pipe Ceremonies prior to the construction of our Lodge, to getting all of the permits passed and approved, to actually having our first Ceremony, it was almost a two year process. And when we had the first Sweat in there and there was kids in there and I was standing outside with one of the Helpers for the lodge, I was near tears right, just knowing that kids and families could experience this in a school for me was just a special form of healing… And for those kids to know they were valued. So you know when you stand outside the lodge, you can hear drumming and singing right, to know that that kind of healing was happening within a school, and not just happening, because happening in and of itself is brilliant, but *happening in a school* [emphasis by participant]. In a courtyard, in the middle of a school, in the inner city of Winnipeg, it just filled my heart.

Meaningful inclusion of Indigenous cultures and worldviews in education necessitates an foundational understanding of the importance of land (inclusive of all water, earth, and air) (Bang et al., 2014; Lowan, 2009) and land-based (or place-based) education (Tuck, McKenzie, & McCoy, 2014). Land extends beyond an understanding of its mere materiality, but instead emphasizes the spiritual, emotion, and intellectual facets (Styres, Haig-Brown, & Blimkie, 2013). It is not only a geographic location, but also the relationships that exist with and to that land.

These relationships are diverse and are both specific yet ungeneralizable (Lowan, 2009). In an Indigenous framework, relationships to land are not characterized as being individualized between the owner and property, as dominant in the neoliberal settler imaginary, but is collective (Tuck, McKenzie, et al., 2014). Land is home to culture and traditions. Like those cultures and traditions that flow from the land, land and relationships to it are animate, fluid, and always in flux (Styres et al., 2013). The land carries memory, histories, stories, and learnings (Styres, 2011). Mohawk lawyer and activist Patricia Monture Angus (1999) explained "People (of all races) sometimes think that Aboriginal cultures have been destroyed. This can never be true. The songs, the language, the ceremonies all live in the land. They belong to Mother" (p. 159). An Indigenous participant in the project reflected on the importance of, and relationships between land, culture, language and identity:

> …Our identity and our Spirit comes from the land… This land, She's so so tired. And She's given us so much including our language…. And when you are on the land, and you are quiet and listening, you can hear the land talk to you. And you can hear the language.

From the land and its relationships flow pedagogies and knowledges. Landscapes, place, and space "produce and teach particular ways of thinking about and being in the world. They tell us the way things are, even when they operate pedagogically beneath a conscious level" (Bang et al., 2014, p. 44). Place, space, and the relationships flowing in and through them inform and are informed by our everyday lives, meaning making, pedagogies, visions, and teaching practices (Styres et al., 2013). "Land is a spiritually infused place, grounded in interconnected and interdependent relationships, cultural positioning and is highly contextualized (Styres & Zinga,

2013, p. 301). Dene Elder Eddie Cook explains that “the land was the best teacher I ever had” (cited in Chambers, 1999, p. 140). The importance of land as teacher and of Indigenous education shows benefit not only for Indigenous students in elementary and secondary schools, but also for teacher candidates in university, particularly within the Manitoba context given some of the barriers outlined in Chapter 7.

Despite the crucial importance of land and the opportunities that land-based education offers, land was somewhat absent from the interview narratives. I do not mean to suggest however, that the importance of land was not understood or recognized by participants, but more that in the context of the research interaction, and the emphasis by participants on advocating for creating a space for Indigenous knowledges and justifying it, rather than specifying and detailing exactly what it would look like. I also recognize that this lack of attention to land in the context of the research interview is in large part dependent on my short-sightedness and failure as a settler interviewer to probe these issues.

Land is intrinsically related to language and language revitalization (Whiskeyjack & Napier, 2020). Language in this sense is:

> … not merely a set of grammatical rules or a vocabulary. It is a flash of the human spirit, the vehicle by which the soul of each particular culture comes into the material world. Every language is an old-growth forest of the mind, a watershed of thought, an ecosystem of spiritual possibilities. (Davis, 2009, p. 3).

Given that linguicide was a central aspect of the IRSS (Nicholas, 2011), language revitalization is crucial to reconciliation, as outlined in the TRC’s Calls to Action (2015e, p. 2, Numbers 13-16), as well as the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

(2007), to which Canada finally removed its objector status in 2016 almost a decade after it was adopted by the U.N. General Assembly (Fontaine, 2016). Paul Disain, a Dene Elder from Stony Rapids explained "our language and culture is the window through which we see the world" (n.d.). For Indigenous peoples, language is a "central source of survival for the people, as well as a critical link to knowledge given to us by our Creator" (Battiste, 1998). It holds customs and traditions and is the repository of vital instructions, guidance, and lessons (Battiste, 1998). Moreover, language revitalization offers one of the most powerful forms of Indigenous resistance to settler colonial domination (Vizenor, Tuck, & Yang, 2014) and tools for articulating demands for self-determination (Tuhiwai Smith, 1999/2012).

Multiple participants spoke about the importance of Indigenous language courses being offered and available to students in schools, as well as pre-existing language skills being recognized and given credit. Where language courses did not yet exist, participants described their "envy" of other schools and divisions that had such opportunities for students and described it as being "on my wish list." An Indigenous participant explained:

> Because I hear that from so many families, that *we are wanting* [emphasis by participant] to learn our language. So Indigenous language immersion courses, I know, there are certain policies and procedures that need to be in place, and funding and all that [short pause]. But I think we can get there, we need to get there.

Participants recounted numerous examples of instances where centring Indigenous culture, identity, and language had a marked contribution on Indigenous students, highlighting their resiliency, and promoting pride in self and community. Indeed cultural revitalization has been utilized as "culture as treatment" in community-based efforts that have successfully intervened

to address Indigenous health including suicide and substance use and addictions as examples (Barker, Goodman, & DeBeck, 2017; Green, 2010; Thunderbird Partnership Foundation, 2012). Similarly, the education literature, from across various cultural contexts, has demonstrated that when students "see themselves" in their schooling, they perform better academically and develop more positive conceptions of self (Castagno & Brayboy, 2008; Gay, 2018). An Indigenous participant highlighted this student success in the following:

> You know incorporating [Indigenous] culture, it benefits everyone, but importantly for Indigenous students, at times, it can give them an opportunity to be the experts, to excel, to build their confidence in who they are. And we all know for kids, if they feel like this doesn't pertain to them, they are going to sit at the back. But as soon as we make them the experts, behaviours decrease, engagement increases, right. I remember having a boy in my class who had just come to the city for school. And he could not read passed a Grade 2 reading level. But he could tell you how to make a Drum. He knew all of the geometry of it, but didn't really know the names. And he could tell you about *all* [emphasis by participant] of the Medicines, when you should pick them, how you should harvest them, what kind of soil they needed, actually he knew the difference between acidic and alkaline soils. So we, we had him become the expert and his science marks increased, because *he taught* [emphasis by participant] the class right. So I am very passionate about that too.

An Indigenous participant recalled her experiences after implementing a targeted intervention program aimed at improving the school success of Indigenous students and how it had contributed to more Indigenous students self-declaring:

> So the program was coming to the end… I had been trying so hard to get into that school [short pause], and they reluctantly allow me in, and this is [*sic*] happened. Like they have reluctantly allowed me in, and the teachers reluctantly took part in it, but then, when they saw the effect that it had on the students both Indigenous and non-Indigenous, it was-, they just continued it throughout the year. [Short pause]. Another big thing is that a lot of the kids, after, and it's not about me, but a lot of the Indigenous kids will start to self-declare that they are Indigenous. So that self-identity is increasing.

More comprehensive and meaningful inclusion of Indigenous education would also benefit settler students, creating knowledge, challenging destructive stories, and potentially working to counter settler ignorance and apathy – necessary and essential and need for the simultaneous path to reconciliation.

Centring Indigenous students. The success of students in the education system depends on a number of factors including classroom features, teacher communities, school and climate, and the external environment (Bascia, 2014; Talbert & McLaughlin, 1999). Participants in this project highlighted the complex interplay of these factors in the settler colonial external environment, and described them as negatively impacting the success of Indigenous students and their opportunities to learn and grow. Recognizing the deep inequities that exist in the contemporary educational system between Indigenous students and settler students (C. Campbell, 2020; Parkin, 2015), as well as the continued harm that results from colonial institutions and society, participants in this project highlighted the importance of working to build Indigenous students' success as key to building equity, as crucial components of education as reconciliation. For instance, when asked to reflect on how she would describe her work in

the education system and her own goals as an educator, a settler participant explained "working within the system… to raise Indigenous students." Similarly, an Indigenous participant expressed:

> For me, it [reconciliation] is about making decisions that contribute to the success of our Indigenous youth and rather than trying to fit these youth inside this standard box, it is about making our box change shape a little bit, to fit for them. Right. And to fit families.

As a starting point to creating a more equitable environment within the education system, an Indigenous participant felt that Indigenous students were deserving of a "stellar" educational experience to make up for, in some small way, the oppression that they endure(d), and have had to resist in their schooling:

> I expect a lot of educators. You know I expect a lot, I expect a lot. I believe that [Indigenous] youth deserve like master teachers. I believe all youth deserve master teachers, but I say in particular Indigenous youth deserve master teachers because we are trying to undo much harm. And so they need, and they deserve stellar school experiences. Because you know, sometimes school is the place where they feel safe. Where they can exhale and breathe.

Participants highlighted the importance of considering Indigenous students as the primary audience for their work, accounting for their needs and capabilities if it were to be considered as an endeavor towards reconciliation. An Indigenous participant highlighted the importance of seeing Indigenous students as your default audience in lesson planning and wondered aloud how curriculum and teaching would look if that were to become the norm:

> And out of all of the expectations for coursework that we have to do when we are in faculty, and all of the lessons planning that we have to do, and all of the content that we have to cover, how much of it involves expectations around Indigenous youth and conversations around Indigenous education and the success of Indigenous children.

A settler participant explained that in recent years, she has tried to create a dialogue among her colleagues in her school to consider centring Indigenous students by asking: "You know considering how are they positioning kids, whose stories are we re-telling over and over in the classes…. We need to be evaluating our work in a more culturally responsive way that is not just about impact."

Educational outcomes of Indigenous students were also connected to the cultural curriculum as described above. Participants cited multiple examples of the improvement of educational outcomes when Indigenous identity, culture and ceremony, and language are integrated into the curriculum, offering opportunities for Indigenous youth to connect with who they are. An Indigenous participant explained:

> Teachers need to understand acutely that culture and identity play a huge role, and language, they play a huge role in the success of Indigenous youth in our school system. And that Indigenous content isn't something that should only be taught from a historical perspective. Somebody that understands that not only do we need to look at the challenges facing Indigenous youth in communities today, but also the strength and brilliance and resilience in Indigenous communities. Often there are courses in high school and university called Indigenous Issues and that word issues like, are there issues, like sure there are. Like clean drinking water in 2019 is an issue, but there is also

> strength. You know and there is also love. And yeah, and somebody who is willing to go above and beyond, that sees being a teacher is not a 9 – 3:30pm job with a 55-minute lunch. And kids know, they know. Tough kids in particular know and they can read you like a book. They can read you like a book. Um, and if you are not there for the right reasons then they will see through it and eat you out alive [chuckle] (Indigenous participant).

Similarly, a settler participant shared the success of a targeted intervention program aimed at Indigenous youth who were not attending school:

> We started a mentorship group between elementary, middle years and high school, and where we would meet, once or twice a week and we would integrate some cultural learning and some Indigenous ways of knowing to try to get our attendance records up with our girls. And we would invite an Indigenous Elder who could come and talk to the youth and to help us. So we had themes in place that we wanted to touch upon that we wanted to try and build a little bit more their confidence, their understanding and to link a little but more of their culture within the school system. We saw almost immediately improvements among many of the students. The impacts could have been tremendous.

A similar program was recalled by an Indigenous participant as a positive factor:

> It's taking people like my boy, my ningozis [Ojibwe for my son], my son, and bringing these [older, Indigenous] students in and sharing their stories about who they are and acting as a mentor so that these little young Indigenous students see themselves in, like they are not going to see themselves in me, you know, they are going to see themselves in teenagers. And build up who they are.

Given the intersecting nature of the social determinants of health (Hankivsky et al., 2014; Roberta L. Woodgate et al., 2017), participants felt that an important opportunity for addressing the impoverishment of Indigenous students (as outlined in Chapter 7) was through the implementation of wrap-around supports and services for students within the school setting. Wrap-around service delivery is a team-based collaborative case management approach; it is a model that is flexible, comprehensive, holistic, and family/person-oriented (AMR Planning and Consulting, 2015; Hill, 2020). Such supports could challenge the intersectional nature of various forms of oppression facing Indigenous students and help them achieve success. An Indigenous participant shared the positive impacts of a pilot program that offered a wrap-around model of care to Indigenous students:

> It was a multidisciplinary support wrap-around model for kids. And so it, through community relationships with local and larger jurisdictional partners, meaning like health, justice, housing and then many local organizations working in the community, to talk about how we were supporting in a good way youth that were facing multidisciplinary needs. So if you found yourself possibly soon you are going to be a young mum and you are struggling with addictions and you have been evicted, so there is a need for multidisciplinary intervention and you think to yourself how would an adult manage that never mind somebody who is in high school. So this program would mobilize people in their systems together with school point coordinator to help surround kids with supports. So either we are bringing kids to the system or we are bringing the system to them, the people are coming to the school. So it just saw such growth. Um, in terms of the partners and the community support as well as helping

> youth on their path to graduation. And kids often, regularly, who were connected to the program were attending school more often, getting more credits. And we were really looking at credit acquisition, retention and achievement right. So, the fact that when you remove barriers, kids are capable. I mean this is not rocket science. But it is really beautiful to see it happen.

Throughout the interviews, multiple participants shared numerous examples of wrap-around interventions in the school setting that had proven successful in helping Indigenous students. One such example was Morningstar, a pilot project of the Southern First Nations Network of Care for students housed in R.B. Russell Vocational High School in Winnipeg offer promise (AMR Planning and Consulting, 2015; Samson, 2017). Such supports were identified by participants as positively impacting the well-being and educational outcomes of Indigenous young people. Importantly and as a common theme, participants identified those programs that included not only Indigenous students but also their parents, caregivers, and siblings. Every participant in this project spoke positively about the impacts of wrap-around models of targeted interventions, though also cited concerns of a bureaucratic nature (e.g., divisional approval, assessment tools) as well as resource and funding constraints that limited the sustainability of such projects.

Similar to the recommendations of the Inquest into the Death of Seven First Nations Youth[19] (Ministry of the Solicitor General, 2016), multiple participants also commented on the need for the educational system to assist Indigenous families moving to urban areas to assist

[19] For more information on the deaths of Jethro Anderson, Curran Strang, Paul Panacheese, Robyn Harper, Reggie Bushie, Kyle Morrisseau, and Jordan Wasasse that occurred between October 2015 and June 2016, please see *Seven Fallen Feathers* (Talaga, 2017).

with culture shock, systems navigation, and ensuring the safety of Indigenous students and their families (York, 2019b). An Indigenous participant shared:

> I was at a school. In the office was a Kookum, I found out later that they were from [community], so Kookum now, she had her Grandchildren. Kookum didn't speak a word of English. She lived in a very secluded community. And *nobody* [emphasis by participant] was there to help her. The kids were very, very [*sic*] quiet. She was dressed like basically whatever she could throw together. The kids too were not, they didn't have mitts or stuff like that. And that's where I became angry. I became angry that there's not supports or interpreters for people who are moving. You know would they know how to take a bus in the city. There was nobody helping her. I think what we really need to do is systems navigation, what we really need to do is be there for First Nations communities when they are moving, and understand that they are newcomers as well. They don't know how to navigate the system as well.

Participants cautioned that this approach of centring Indigenous students in order to balance inequities in education and in society, an approach that one participant referred to as "progressive and critical of both education and reconciliation," was not necessarily in line with mainstream settler society, including their fellow educators, nor with the overarching political, economic, and social structures of society. An Indigenous participant expressed her frustration at the reaction of some of her white colleagues who have construed her work leading targeted interventions with Indigenous students as racism:

> I've had people suggest to me that I am being racist, which is actually technically impossible, because I, you know this is not a group that have had power and privilege

> historically or modern day. I've had people say I'm not spiritual enough, and you know what, kiss my ass. I'm where I need to be and I'm at peace with that and I can sleep at night and look at myself in the mirror.

In similar vein, an Indigenous participant shared:

> You know really really [sic] spiritually evolved people will say we are all in this together and that we really need to work at it together if we are going to, for everybody's children, for everyone. But I'm not there yet, right. Because I am tired. Still I'm working through my own anger. So right now my focus is on Indigenous students [short pause] not at the exclusion of others, but just that is all I can put my focus on, and that for me is part of this reconciliation journey.

Building Blocks to Breaking the Settler Colonial Chains

While all of the participants advocated for working within the settler colonial system, this should not be taken to mean that they were not committed to broader goals such as Indigenous sovereignty; but rather to say that in the context of their work and in the context of this research encounter, they expressed the actions they took to work within system. An Indigenous participant explained:

> I am not single handedly going to change what public education looks like in Canada. Right the system has looked like this for a very very very [*sic*] long time. And it is not something that right now in my current role I have the ability to fix.

Participants repeatedly pointed to the need to for a paradigm shift and to both challenge and rethink the dominant educational approach and paradigms: "it is about a new way of doing things" (settler participant). Common characteristics of what participants referenced as a

paradigm shift including building trust with communities, collaborative relationships with Indigenous youth and their families, as well as other marginalized groups, leadership and mentorship, and importantly processes of unsettling for settlers. Together, such aspects offered a potential to challenge the asymmetrical, paternalistic, and oppressive power relations that have characterized settler colonialism in Canada.

Community-building and collaboration. With specific reference to the education system, participants identified the need for a number of changes "that challenge the old way of doing things, but would have a potentially to transform this system just by doing what we should have been doing all along – talking to Indigenous communities and seeing them as partners" (settler participant). For many participants, engaging with Indigenous communities as partners was a key element in actualizing what they described as reconciliation (the inclusion of Indigenous education in the curriculum, the emphasis on Indigenous culture, identity, and worldviews, and promoting Indigenous student success). As an example, a participant shared an approach that mirrored that of a culturally-grounded curriculum – an iterative process of developing curricula that is grounded in community cultures, in collaboration and dialogue with community members (Johnson & Levitan, 2020). This Indigenous participant recalled work around a project that sought guidance from Elders around the implementation of teachings related to IRSS:

> But there are places and spaces that are making inroads in this work in a really good and authentic way, in a consultive [*sic*] way, with community and knowledge keepers and Elders and scholars and hiring more Indigenous educators and Indigenous administrators. And having Indigenous education and success in strategic plans. Like

there is change happening. *But, but,* [emphasis by participant] is there still systemic racism in places and that prevents meaningful consultation.

Community-building also extended to the Indigenous families that participants were working with. Given that education has been a tool of colonialism and racism, for many Indigenous peoples, there is a great deal of mistrust of the educational systems, including with agents of that system (BC Teachers' Federation, 2016; Milne, 2016). Teachers in general, and settler educators more specifically, are trained and work in a field that grants them a sense of professional power, and yet does not always acknowledge Indigenous orientations to family relations and learning (Kovach, Carriere, Montgomery, Barrett, & Gilles, 2015). Moreover, settler educators may not always recognize or acknowledge the strength of Indigenous families, and instead are influenced by destructive stories and bias (conscious and unconscious) that may taint their approach to Indigenous families (Milne & Wotherspoon, 2020). Indeed, participants in this project recalled that many of their colleagues perceived Indigenous families as adversaries. This become even more problematic in contexts where the child welfare system is involved in a family at the behest of a school (Milne & Wotherspoon, 2020). An Indigenous participant highlighted the need for a paradigm shift, to make a concerted effort to see and approach Indigenous families as partners in a child's education. In many contexts, such an approach was a marked difference that required concerted effort by leadership in schools:

> I would say that I have worked along with the teams that I have supported tremendously hard at making sure that families feel like they are true partners in education really. Because there is nobody who knows more about a child than their family. And as much as we might think otherwise or believe otherwise we know is best, I

have yet to meet a mum or a family member or a Grandma or an uncle who doesn't want the very best for their child or their granddaughter or their niece and nephew. Right. It's just a matter of what we view to be the best, or what we view to be the right thing, or what we view to be the right path. And sometimes families in many of our communities might not have the ability to access the resources or the opportunities needed to have their children I was going to say students, but their children reach their full potential right. So again when I am sitting at a desk with a Grandmother because her granddaughter has been suspended for something, you know the idea of sitting in an office at a desk in like a sterile environment-,… With somebody that you hardly know, right, it would cross my mind that that would be really hard for Grandma right. You know would I say to her like thank you so much for coming in and I appreciate all the support you are giving to your granddaughter and to me, and trying to come up with like a good solution to move forward. So like what do you need. Do you want some water, some coffee, like you asked me do I want tea, so to come in and to sit. So like from how I am dressed, what my office looks like, to the language I am using to how I am sitting are all things that run through my mind when I am talking with family, you know. It is not simply as simple or as easy as having someone come in to sit and have a formal conversation.

Collaboration also extended to the school structure itself, with participants highlighting the need for a challenge to traditional hierarchical structures in favour of more bottom-up and collaborative approaches to change within the school system:

> I mean anything that you do in the educational system, if you want any change or movement it has to be collaborative, they have to have an invested interest, cause if not, change will just happen for the moment but it won't be meaningful or authentic. And it won't be long lasting. They have to have an invested interest. So I think that like it can be about reconciliation, it can be about Indigenous studies, it can be whatever. Or it could be about moving you know flexible seating within the classrooms where it's not single rows. Or it could be about math literacy and about problem-solving and keeping it open. Like whatever issue you see in terms of where growth can happen, you have to try and build capacity within them, it can't be top-down.

Participants also spoke about the importance of building social networks in their work. This was essential not only work their work with education *as* reconciliation, but also credited as a form of self-care. A settler participant shared:

> I do have some colleagues, and I think I am learning to be around people that are supportive and that are like-minded in that way, that they are willing to push boundaries, that they are not satisfied with the status quo of how things are in education. And I, so I am learning to sort of seek out people who are willing to sort of be allies along with me. That I can learn from, that can you know, the transfer of Indigenous knowledges.

Leadership and mentors. Participants also expressed the importance of school culture (and/or divisional culture) and of leadership in impacting their work as educators as well as the success of students. Some of the participants spoke positively about their school cultures, citing progressive leadership, autonomy in their role, and the promotion of transformative and

emancipatory pedagogies. Participants who cited these positive examples highlighted the importance of leadership alongside the power of bottom-up social change in the workplace. A settler participant shared:

> [In my division] the knowledge among leadership when it comes to the reconciliation and like transformation, you know these challenges we face, it was more advanced and so they were able to be also the sub-leaders and the leaders within the school so that if conversations continued in the staff room or if they were to push the lessons a little bit further along, they were able to come and demonstrate that. So it wasn't just top down, it was part of the culture of the school, it was at the grassroots level and that's kind of where you have to start.

However, not all participants cited a positive experience. Participants spoke of their school/division culture as being "backwards", "stifling", "all talk, no action", and "all about who you know." The following quotation from a settler participant highlights some of the other concerns with school culture:

> I think my school division is very insulated. I think that's part of the problem. I am actively seeking out connections with other divisions… But I think that would probably be frowned upon that I am even connecting with others.… Probably, you know like oh we have so many supports in the division why would you. But I think we have lots to learn from each other. It's so easy to become kind of ingrained in the specific culture of your own division. And not seeing possibilities because you are just, it is a culture on its own. I think it's always good to learn from other people and to keep broadening your perspectives.

Leadership in their schools and school division was cited by many participants as key in their success as educators, but importantly for the purpose of this project as contributing to education *as* reconciliation. PACS offers important insights on peace leadership that may have resonance. In protracted ethnopolitical conflicts, peace leaders play a crucial role in not only de-escalating tensions, but also transforming those conflicts (Byrne, 2018). An Indigenous participant explained the importance of leaders in the school setting:

> I think depending on where you are working, depending on who your leadership is, depending on who your school base leader is. I mean I feel really strongly that principals have a great deal of power. And when nobody else is watching what they enforce, or value, or support, or negate, matters tremendously right. And so school-based leadership is everything right. And I think that looks differently. It can happen with teachers in good ways and it does. I've worked with brilliant teachers in my career. And I've worked with brilliant administrators in my career. I've also worked with people that don't quite have the understanding in a way that I believe they need to, to best support youth.

Equally important, all participants mentioned, without prompting, the importance of mentorship in their early years of teaching. Participants spoke of their first years in the job as ones where they felt they were "drowning", "floundering," and "buckling under the pressure." Mentorship was credited as helping these participants wade through the various challenges. Mentors were also credited as helping participants figure out who they are, and who they want to be as an educator, their belief system, their classroom management practice, their assessment practices, as well as helping them develop the type of relationships they wanted to

have with students. Importantly, mentors were also described as individuals who helped to develop and expand their knowledge base when it comes to the possibility of education *as* reconciliation. Coincidentally, the majority of mentorship stories were ones that were cross-cultural in nature bridging the divide between Indigenous and settler. An Indigenous participant shared:

> I have been lucky enough in my career to have a number of people that have supported my journey. And when I say mentor, I mean people who will stretch your thinking, ask you hard questions, cause you to move forward in a good way. In my first teaching position, there was a teacher there who I am still connected to, to this day. She was a non-Indigenous woman who was doing such tremendous work to support community and Indigenous kids. And I remember thinking probably like three years when I was there when I stopped trying to swim, [chuckle], when I was looking at the way that she was supporting and making positive change in the community, I thought to myself, boy would I love to do that one day.

Participants repeatedly highlighted the importance of professional development, ongoing learning opportunities, such as the following comment from a settler participant:

> And so, we did so much that really helped them grow as educators. So we had Elders come in, quite often. We did PD [Professional Development] days where they would just talk about their experiences in Residential School Systems and the vulnerability that our educators opened up and said how come I did not know this, I should know this, I'm an educator in the twenty-first century I should know more than this. Which then kind of gave that permission to start talking about it.

Another settler spoke also spoke positively about the potential of professional development days that was focused on Indigenous content and learning from Elders, but also questioned why such opportunities were standalone, rather than part of everyday teaching:

> I had this chance to participate in this PD opportunity where you learn from Elders and Indigenous leaders in the school, in the School Division and then you go back to your home community and try to make some of those practices and put them in place. And so I started to go to different ceremonies and to get involved in things like that. And just to see like why is this an extra, why is this not part of what we are doing every single day.

An important element of informal professional development was the reliance of many participants on their social networks. Participants spoke of building relationships with "critical colleagues" that bridged the Indigenous-settler divide in order to gain new learnings and understandings, as well as an important form of self-care. Participants also spoke of the importance of social media networks, and multiple participants referenced utilizing social media to follow certain hashtags, educators, activists, and other community-based organizations across the country and internationally that advocated for emancipatory educational programs and support. These social media networks and development opportunities were cited as being a "starting point" for many participants or "you know this initial entry point, just eye opening", signaling that more work was required on their part to enhance their learning.

Participants also highlighted the importance of professional autonomy, particularly in the context of a neoliberal system focused on measurement. A settler participant commented:

> You know, there's this push that you have to measure and that language of measurement. There is a big problem there. But I think also, some space to do the work, to connect, and to have my own professional development supported…it's all about power, about needing permission, about who has the power to say what is valued, of what is important. I think the permission and flexibility to do what I-, more professional autonomy I guess to do what I think would be helpful to students and you know to explore that a little bit. And um, I think there's always this monitoring of things. You know, what are you doing, how is this working, show me your evidence of it. And I can do that, but it is not necessarily what they are looking for, so there's this mis-match of you know oh you are not doing.

Settlers unsettling – "doing the work". Most participants described themselves as individuals who "live and breathe and sleep education." For many of participants – these "worker bees", their identity as educators was intimately linked to their role as advocates and activists in the community. Participants in this project described their role as educators as being intimately tied to emancipatory education, as well as reconciliation (though I do recognize that this also relates in part to the fact that they were participating in a research project on the topic). Participants spoke repeatedly of "doing the work" – of spending hours outside of work committed to reconciliation (e.g., attending TRC events, participating in protests), and actively worked to increase their own capacities and knowledge base particularly as it related to Indigenous worldviews (e.g., book clubs, attending lectures, learning from Indigenous Elders), networking, and volunteering with local community organizations. This was at times a source of energy, but for some participants there was also a recognition that they were fatigued and

exhausted by the demands of it all. An Indigenous participant shared, “the 18 year old in me would love to be more at marches and walks, and sitting on Boards, love it. But I’m just tired. I’m tired. So yeah, the Grandma in me goes urgh.” This exhaustion was even more accentuated for Indigenous participants who shared that in addition to the physical and mental fatigue that comes with their role as educators, they were fatigued by the feeling of having to explain their lived experiences or subject positions to a primarily settler audience of colleagues. An Indigenous participant explained that within the workplace, she is often called upon to answer for, and about “anything deemed Indigenous.” She went on to explain:

> So on the one hand, I’m glad you know that there are people who at least recognize that Indigenous peoples should be involved. But sometimes [sigh] its tiring. I think, there is a variety of challenges, you know none that I can pinpoint because they are fairly small, but they have that cumulative effect.

Similarly, an Indigenous participant shared:

> I find sometimes I’m expected to represent all things Indigenous at work. Or having to explain just common things that you know Canadians can find just by going on google or by asking questions. Sometimes I get resentful and I know that’s not necessarily the best response. But it can be really tiring. It makes me appreciate more those spaces where people get it, where I don’t need to explain the most basic things about my experience.

Some of the settler participants recognized this added work placed on the shoulders of their Indigenous colleagues and made a concerted effort to be an ally, to have difficult conversations in the workplace with other settlers, to offer to co-lead workshops or professional development

activities that could further settler's knowledge as examples. Another settler participant commented:

> That this is something that I just need to be doing. And that is kind of part of being an ally. It is taking the burden off of having Indigenous peoples always do these workshops, you know, there is so much pressure on them [Indigenous colleagues]. And part of that is to get out there and take on some of that.

Despite the many challenges in their work, participants found a deep sense of purpose from their work, much of what related to the opportunities their work offered to build relationships, and to (re)story and (re)learn. An Indigenous participant cited her work with Indigenous children as her source of hope. Another Indigenous participant explained that when she first got into education, she wanted to be in the inner city with Indigenous students living in difficult life circumstances, as well as an approach that has allowed her to begin to disrupted the destructive stories that are still commonplace about Indigenous peoples:

> So going into a Kindergarten class gives you lots of hope just to see how kids are naturally with each other and how joyful and they see school as a positive place. Sometimes if I see, like when I am driving to the North End, I see mums and kids at bus stops, and just seeing that, seeing the beauty in how they interact with each other. Like that's not highlighted in the stories we hear. You know women doing everyday things and caring for their kids. And just you know, those little moments of love here and there that we don't stop to recognize.

Recognizing the pervasive nature of the settler imaginary, participants spoke about the need for educators, specifically settler educators, to be reflexive, of opening themselves up to

feelings of discomfort, of facing and acknowledge their white settler privilege, and of embracing humility in their roles as educators. In many ways these traits mirrored those recognized as traits essential for more formal peacebuilding leaders – those who develop reflexive, analytical, and empathetic understandings of and framing of the complexity of conflicts, and work together with others to help collaboratively transform those conflicts (Byrne, 2018). A settler participant spoke of "looking at the structures that have given rise to where you are and bringing that every day to your teaching and your relationships with kids in the classroom." An Indigenous participant commented:

> We need to name what has happened right here. And then we need to begin to unlearn everything we know or we think we know. And I mean the collective we because I live in this same system. I hear those same messages, they just hit us [Indigenous people] differently. And then we need to open our minds to learning again from a different starting point.

Similarly, an Indigenous participant commented:

> Without any sort of acknowledgement of the impact of how colonialism has you know set us up on this path, you doing a class on Residential Schools isn't going to accomplish anything. It just isn't. Because really Pauline, how can you talk about Residential Schools and not also talk about how at the same time that my people were being pushed down, white people or Canadians you know were being held up. For no reason other than they weren't us. And so we really need, as teachers we really need to approach our role with respect, with caution, and from a place that we as educators should always be open to opening our minds and gaining new knowledge… And you might stumble, you might

> falter. I mean you will. But you really looking inside to see how what exists in the world around us is impacted by who we are. And that's not always going to be easy.

Another Indigenous participant added:

> You know, I'm not asking for white people to walk in and know off the top of their head everything but you know, humble yourself a little. You don't need to know it all. But we're not that scary [laughing]. But in seriousness, like I get it, we know it's going to be hard. But that pales in comparison to what we have had to endure.

The process of unsettling – of having settler educators explore and rethink our collective identity and settler normativity can be a space of uncertainty, of discomfort, and of vulnerability (Regan, 2010). Indeed, it should be such a place. That is not to say that this unsettling process, and the acknowledgement of white privilege and settler social location should be about guilt or shame; to do so would be counterproductive (Lund & Carr, 2015). However, the need for dialogue, while discomforting is fundamental and can be liberating. Settler discomfort underpinned other conceptualizations of unsettling, particularly in the education setting. Settler educator Teresa Strong-Wilson (2007) uses the term 'touchstone stories' to denote those pivotal moments where a settler is forced to confront the often invisible stories that shape the perceptions of and relationships with the other, in this case Indigenous peoples (Strong-Wilson, 2007, p. 116), while den Heyer's (2009) uses the notion of 'sticky points' to describe difficult and uncomfortable moments that result when divergent narratives, stories, and values as elements of the curricula clash and meet. These discomforting moments however, offer an opportunity to address what settler Roger Epp (2003) describes as the "settler problem" and to foster a sense of critical hope, to move beyond a sense of paralysis

that may come with living in a context of overwhelming oppression (Freire, 1992; hooks, 2003; Regan, 2010, pp. 22-24)

Recommendations for Policy

From the findings flow a number of policy recommendations (e.g., poverty-reduction strategies, provincially-mandated Indigenous Education curriculum) that together holds the potential to, in turn, positively impact the success and achievement of Indigenous students and to build equity, and thus contribute to what participants described as reconciliation in the educational system, and in society.

It is crucial to note however, that it is not necessarily a lack of policy recommendations that is the concern when it comes to more equitable relations between Indigenous peoples and settlers, including the settler state, but rather a lack of political will. The TRC's Calls to Action (2015e) provides comprehensive recommendations addressing work needed in multiple realms, including education, that could contribute to a more equitable and just relationship between Indigenous peoples and settlers. Numerous institutions, organizations have followed suit, creating their own Calls to Action and implementation projects. And yet here we are, six years later, with Indigenous peoples still fighting for respectful and fair relationships with the settler state, for self-determination, for free, informed, and prior consent, for clean water, for the safety of Indigenous women and girls. Indigenous peoples continue to resist oppression and fight for their rights against an onslaught of systemic racism, marginalization, and oppression at the hands of both the settler state and settler society. Therefore, it is not a lack of recommendations that serves as the challenge. Rather, it is their non-implementation in a context of ongoing dispossession and paternalism that leads some Indigenous activists to

comment that not only is reconciliation dead, it was in fact never alive (Hale, 2020; Talaga, 2020).

Policy Recommendation #1: Provincially mandated Indigenous education. The foundation of Indigenous Education is to create healthy and sustainable relationships in every step of life (N. Sinclair, 2020b). All participants in this project were adamant that there be an equitable inclusion of Indigenous education, mandated by the province so as to counter moves that may be included in the Settler Educator's Playbook (see Chapter 7). A mandated Indigenous Education curriculum requires ongoing resources (including financial resources, time, human resources) to ensure that respectful and reciprocal relationships are adequately built with Indigenous communities. It also requires that these communities, Elders, and Knowledge Keepers are appropriately remunerated. It requires dismantling power asymmetries in settler-Indigenous relationships, so that Indigenous communities are centred and able to lead the way. It also requires ongoing commitment and resources that ensure that settler educators, are taught alongside Indigenous communities and leaders how to teach this curriculum in an ethical and respectful manner. In summary, based on the findings described above, this mandated Indigenous Education curriculum would have the following key features:

- Led by Indigenous leaders, Elders, and Knowledge Keepers and in collaboration with Indigenous youth and communities (Johnson & Levitan, 2020);
- Embraces Indigenous knowledges, cultures, identities, and worldviews;
- Builds connections to and with land (Simpson, 2011; Tuhiwai Smith et al., 2019), seeing "land as first teacher" (Styres, 2011), and be rooted in place and space (Chambers, 1999)

- Work towards Indigenous language revitalization (Battiste, 1998; Wohlberg, 2016);
- Operates in a way that (re)builds pride and resiliency in the multifaceted aspects of Indigenous identity/identities;
- Has as its default audience Indigenous youth, with high expectations set for these Indigenous learners;
- Uses culturally-sensitive assessment models relevant to all students, but particularly Indigenous students;
- Values prior-knowledge, identities, skills, and lived experiences of Indigenous students, their families, as well as Indigenous educators;
- Equity-based and wholistic[20] in nature.

Policy Recommendation #2: Poverty-reduction initiatives. Neoliberal economic policies have created conditions that increase the vulnerability of marginalized groups, including Indigenous communities (Silver, 2016). Complex poverty (Silver & Sjoberg, 2019) alongside anti-Indigenous racism and white privilege (Fowler & McDermott, 2020) negatively impact Indigenous student success. Increasing public investment and support to community-based organizations (Campaign 2020 Report Card on Child and Family Poverty in Canada, 2020; Silver, 2016; Silver & Sjoberg, 2019) that work to address poverty are necessary. It is important to strengthen families and their capacities, and build community (Silver & Sjoberg, 2019). While publicly-funded education and school-based initiatives can alleviate the immediate manifestations of complex poverty and mediate disadvantage, schools alone cannot address the larger structural and social changes (Orlowski & Cottrell, 2019, p. 7), particularly those that

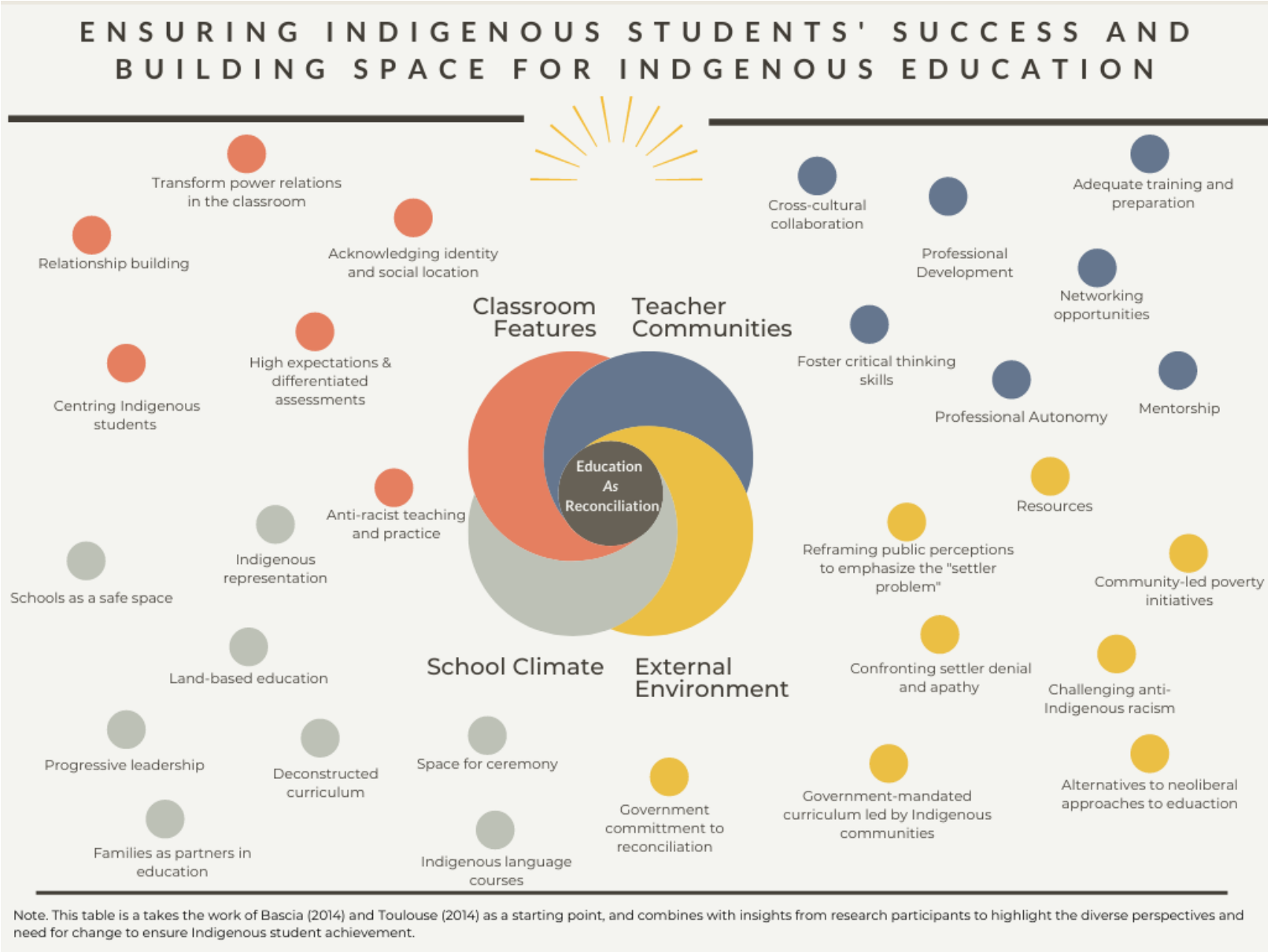
[20] Following the work of (Absolon, 2019), spelled with *wh* to affirm that it is a derivative of a whole.

are required to dismantle the oppression of Indigenous peoples in the Canadian settler colonial state.

Policy Recommendation #3: Fully implement and honour UNDRIP. While not explicitly mentioned by participants in this project, it is crucial that the government commit to fully implementing the UNDRIP (2007), "braiding" international, domestic, and Indigenous laws together in a way that honours the inherent rights of Indigenous peoples to self-determination. UNDRIP represents the concerted efforts of Indigenous peoples around the world "to stem the destructive and disempowering effects" of colonialism (Craft et al., 2018, p. x), and lays out the obligations of government to honour and fulfill those rights providing a blueprint through which the settler state can work towards developing a more respectful and equitable relationship with Indigenous nations (Lightfoot, 2019a, 2019b; Lorenzo, 2020). Following the lead of the TRC, the full adoption and implementation can assist in serving as a framework for reconciliation (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015e). Moreover, given that many settlers view their "turning points" (see Chapter 5) in relation to state-based initiatives, such an approach has a tremendous symbolic impact, and can signal to settlers the importance of reconciliation.

Recommendations for Educators and the Education System

There is a critical need for educational systems to be "more cohesive, critical, and devoted to transparently addressing social inequalities at all levels" (Carr, 2016, p. 55). Ensuring the success of Indigenous students in the education system requires addressing barriers at multiple, intersecting levels including classroom features, teacher communities, school and community, and the external environment (Bascia, 2014; Toulouse, 2016) as outlined in the findings and as summarized in Figure 5.



Note. This table is a takes the work of Bascia (2014) and Toulouse (2014) as a starting point, and combines with insights from research participants to highlight the diverse perspectives and need for change to ensure Indigenous student achievement.

Figure 5. Factors Influencing Indigenous Student Success

1. Addressing anti-Indigenous racism and white privilege in education

Black American author Ibram X. Kendi asserts "the only way to undo racism is to consistently identify it and describe it – and then dismantle it." Racism must be addressed and acknowledged at the micro and at the systemic level. As the beginning point of anti-racist practices and policies, there is a crucial need to acknowledge race and to "cultivate energies against the stickiness of racial segregation" (Saldanha, 2006, p. 10) and to ensure that it infuses the curriculum. Moreover, a curriculum can only be as anti-racist as the person delivering it. Recommendations include:

- Ensure that anti-racism is guided by Indigenous peoples, alongside people of colour (Lawrence & Dua, 2005).
- Develop anti-racism frameworks led by Indigenous leaders, Elders and Knowledge Keepers, students and their families;
- Incorporate anti-racist and anti-bias training into leadership, teacher education, professional development opportunities, and pedagogy with sustained dialogue as it relates to identity, difference, and inequities (Carr, 2016);
- Consult with staff, parents, students, and other community members to understand and acknowledge experiences of systemic and everyday racism, as well as privilege;
- Build in systems for students and staff to provide feedback and concerns, free from recourse, to promote safe spaces in the classroom and school;
- Formalize anti-racist education and practices and embed them in school policies, with clear directives as to how to address racism;

- Provide materials that challenge not only racism but also make explicit and work to challenge white, settler privilege for educators for use in their classrooms;
- Develop employment equity plants at all school divisions with hiring practices that demonstrate a commitment to equity and inclusion. Employment and representation of Indigenous peoples at all levels of including management and administration roles.

2. Addressing the burdens placed on Indigenous educators

The engrained, yet obvious nature of racism was a source of frustration for many participants, particularly Indigenous participants, who described the added burden of having to repeatedly explain the impacts of race to the wider, mainstream (and specifically white settler) society. Work by BIPOC activists perhaps hints at the importance of single identity spaces as spaces where BIPOC can be free of the need to explain (Blackwell, 2018). Indigenous participants in this project spoke of the sense of educator (and activist) exhaustion that often comes from their work in the educational system, where they are often expected to explain (and re-explain) their lived experiences or perform for the white gaze. Recommendations include:

- Meaningful inclusion and representation of Indigenous peoples at all levels of education system;
- Provide resources that support single-identity spaces for BIPOC educators free from patterns of white dominance, stereotypes, and white gaze;
- Ensure that all Indigenous staff and employees are not overburdened with unsustainable workloads;

- Mentorship and leadership programs that offer learning opportunities to settlers on issues of settler colonialism and allyship to lighten the burden on Indigenous educators;
- Support and resources available to support networking and professional development for Indigenous educators and settler allies.

3. Adequately preparing pre-service teachers for teaching as reconciliation

Teacher candidates and recent graduates must be better equipped to teach *as* reconciliation. Pre-service education and training must include skills and knowledge that can help adequately prepare candidates for the socio-economic and cultural realities of many of their students (BC Teachers' Federation, 2016). Moreover, while a mandatory Indigenous course requirement offers an important first step (Siemens, 2018), resistance to those mandatory courses (Lamoureux, 2018) demonstrate that they are not nearly enough to counter the destructive with not only the knowledge that can counter claims of settler ignorance. Teacher education programs must better prepare educators with increased knowledge and understanding of, and the ability to make connections between, Canada's historic and contemporary relationship with Indigenous peoples, reconciliation, and Indigenous education. Finally, teacher candidates must also be skilled in and have the capacity to embody an anti-racist lens that can be used to evaluate all aspects of their work, including their relationships with students, families, and staff, as well as curricular practices and pedagogies.

4. Addressing settler apathy

Reconciliation will be a long and arduous journey and yet a recent survey suggests that settler support for reconciliation is already waning (Environics Institute for Survey Research, 2020). The following recommendations are directed primary towards settlers, and specifically towards

settler educators. To be clear, I do so with no attempt to remove myself from the complicity of settler colonialism. Our relationships with colonialism, with and to the land, and with Indigenous peoples is central to our colonial presence here. With this in mind, and based on the guidance of primarily the Indigenous participants in this project, as well as the literature from Indigenous scholars and activists, it is crucial that we (settlers) work to engage in a process of unsettling (Regan, 2010). This discomforting and uncomfortable space can open an opportunity for settlers to embark on a reflexive journey that can potentially become a space through which we can (re)build more equitable relationships in a settler colonial context. Rebuilding in this way serves to acknowledges harm, complicity and inequities, build fairness and respect, and work to enhance Indigenous rights (Talaga, 2020). Participants used language such as doing the work, learning and unlearning, and the need for reflexivity. Their thoughts are summarized in the following:

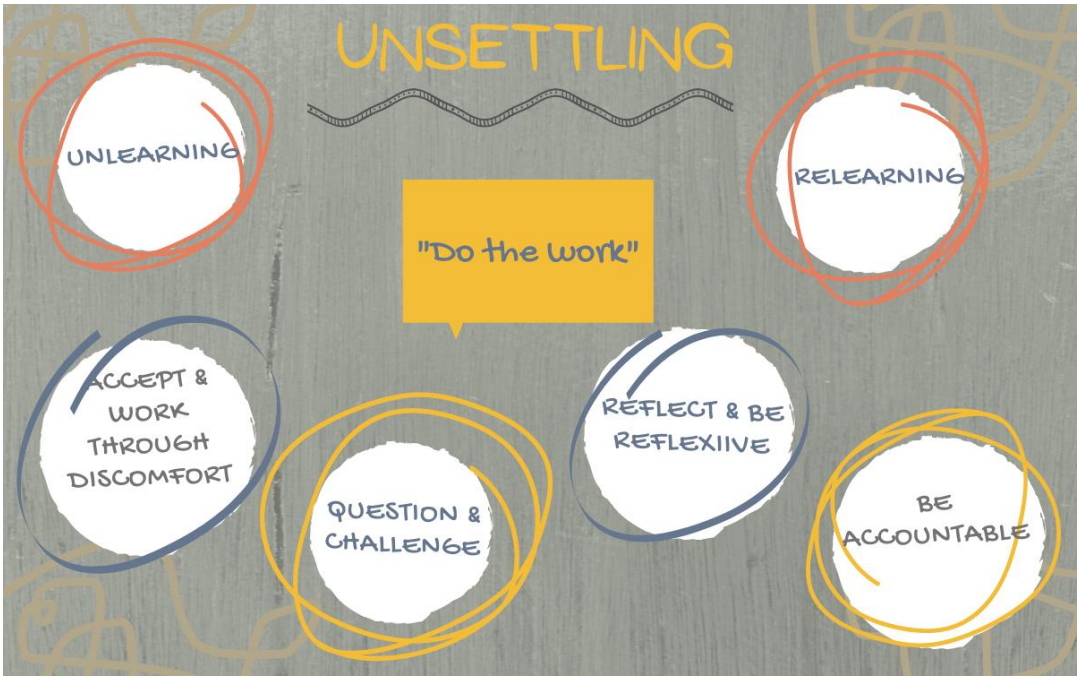


Figure 6. Facets of Unsettling

Addressing widespread settler apathy and racial contempt requires multiple interventions. With specific reference to the settler playbook, the following strategies were suggested by participants and in the literature.

The Settler Educators' Playbook	Problematic Narratives	Implications for Education as Reconciliation
Lowering the bar	Indigenous students can achieve success only if we lower expectations and standards.	• See Indigenous students as capable. • Build capacities in Indigenous students and their families. • Ensure assessment tools are not uni-dimensional or built on only western measures.
"There's no Indigenous kids in this class"	Curricula is to be geared towards a white settler gaze. Teaching about Indigenous worldviews and histories as important only when there is Indigenous students in the classroom.	• Consider how your work would change if you had an Indigenous audience in mind. • Deconstruct the curriculum, and re-build with the guidance of Indigenous communities
Reconciliation. Check.	Seeing reconciliation as a box to check. Discussing reconciliation through superficial actions without addressing root causes.	• Review the TRC's reports, including but not limited to the Calls to Action. • Reconciliation cannot be reduced to symbolic actions only; it requires substantive (Madden, 2019) and at times disruptive work (H. King, 2019).
Indigenous content = Residential Schools = Reconciliation	Settlers misconstruing Indigenous content with only teaching about Residential Schools and seeing stories of pain and suffering as the single story of Indigenous peoples. Claiming lack of resources or lack of knowledge of community protocols to abscond from responsibility.	• Actively resist reductionist and Eurocentric knowledge systems. • Teach Indigenous brilliance and success, the diversity of worldviews and cultures, and the vast Indigenous knowledge systems, as much as you teach suffering and trauma • Indigenous photographer and poet tenille k. campbell writes "our joy is just as revolutionary as our survival… our images matter, our stories matter, our joy matters" (2020)
Tokenism	Symbolic celebrations of Indigenous culture(s) presented as equating the meaningful inclusion of Indigenous content.	• Meaningful inclusion and representation of Indigenous peoples at all levels; • Ensure hiring practices are progressive and move beyond academic qualifications.
I can't teach that	Claiming respect for Indigenous cultural practices as a means of refusing to teach content as it relates to Indigenous peoples. Claiming fear of mis-speaking and mis-stepping, and lacking confidence.	• Offer opportunities to work with "Indigenous coaches" (Milne, 2017, pp. 8-9) These must be paid positions.

"Don't forget the land thingy"	Notion that simply to recite a land acknowledgement script is sufficient.	• There is no room for performance in land acknowledgement statements. • A land acknowledgement statement in the settler colonial context must: - Recognize the Indigenous lands on which we are presently gathered; - Recognize that we are gathered in this place as a result of colonization; - Recognition that Indigenous peoples have enduring relationships to the land; - Recognize treaties in effect, and to what extent they are being honoured; - Recognition that honoring these relationships requires ongoing work, including in academia (Horzempa, 2020; Tuck et al., 2019; Zuroski, 2020).
Claiming Indigeneity	Settlers claiming Indigenous ancestry as a means of removing them from the complicity of settler colonialism.	• As a white settler, and recognizing the massive harm that has been caused by settlers imposing restrictions on Indigenous identity, it is not at all my intention to say who has the rights to claim Indigenous identity. Rather than emphasizing blood, DNA, or ancestry as a marker of Indigenous identity however, following the lead of Indigenous leaders, the emphasis is on relationality (Pedri-Spade, 2020; Reardon & TallBear, 2012; N. Sinclair, 2020a; Spady, 2017; TallBear, 2019).
"We're welcoming of all cultures."	Claims of multiculturalism and diverse classrooms as a means of stifling Indigenous sovereignty.	• Recognition of the rights of Indigenous peoples in Canada that exist beyond claims of diversity and tolerance. • Understanding the importance of privileging Indigenous education, histories, identities, cultures, and worldviews within diverse classrooms (St. Denis, 2011). • Critical reflexivity (Dion, 2007) to locate themselves within a complex web of privileges and oppressions. • Challenging framing of Indigenous knowledge systems and worldviews as a "glimpse into an ethnic community" (Marker, 2006, p. 503).

Table 5. The Settler Educators' Playbook

Other more practical recommendations for schools and educational institutions based on the findings include:

- The role of Canada as a settler colony must be explicit in education. Comprehensive information on settler colonialism is needed for both new and established educators as a resource guide and critical skills to engage in unsettling and decolonizing work must be fostered;
- Leadership must work to challenge any and all forms of settler colonial domination with the capacity to educate settler colonial relations (Absolon, 2019);
- Encouragement of, and space for, critically reflexive practices of teaching and learning to explore the influence of societal, ideological, and ethical assumptions and moral beliefs. Central to reflexive practice is understanding one's own identity, social location, and feeling of belonging (Walsh, St-Denis, Bear, & Elder, 2018, p. 104).
- Schools must see Indigenous parents, caregivers, and families as partners in their child's education. This also requires that schools reach out to actively build the trust that has been broken with Indigenous parents and schools/other educational institutions as a result of the IRSS (Milne & Wotherspoon, 2020);
- Given that all participants relied on metaphors to conceptualize reconciliation, educational materials building on metaphors as an attempt to counter settler denial, ignorance, and apathy may be worthwhile. However, such an endeavor must be guided by Indigenous communities to ensure that the language utilized is appropriate;

- Specific learning and development opportunities mandated for settler educators that works to de-centre white settler supremacy and privilege and centres Indigenous peoples' resurgence (Snelgrove et al., 2014);
- Opportunities to engage in intercultural and cross-cultural dialogue and learning experiences (Rocke, 2012) that limit the physical and spatial distance between Indigenous peoples and settlers and challenge the destructive stories and myths of Indigenous peoples. This may include community-based initiatives such as Circles for Reconciliation (2020). Other potential opportunities could include cross-cultural mentorship programs (both formal and informal) for educators;
- Toolbox of best practices in anti-colonial, antiracist, and decolonial education work that can be disseminated online.

A summary of some of the advice to settler educators on unsettling, using quotes from participants in the project is outlined in Figure 7.

Figure 7. Advice to Educators, from Educators

Summary

Participants in this project are committed to working within the public education system to address and redress some of the inequities that Indigenous peoples face in the education system as a result of the settler colonial barriers and chains. This chapter outlined how participants in this project described education *as* reconciliation – namely to work within the education system to create a provincially-mandated Indigenous Education curriculum, to create space for Indigenous cultures and identities in the curricula in and the school, and to centre Indigenous students. This chapter also described how participants in this project supported a paradigm shift – highlighting leadership, community-building and collaboration, and the need for settlers to unsettle – as a means of challenging the settler colonial status quo and working towards more equitable Indigenous-settler relations.

Chapter 9. Lessons Learnt and Moving Forward

> The way we educate our children and ourselves must change.
> - Truth and Reconciliation Commission (2015c, p. 317)

Introduction

The TRC's Calls to Action (2015e) provides a blueprint for action in the work towards reconciliation (Jung, 2018). In particular, the Calls to Action (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015e) outline various recommendations with regards to legislation, policies, resources, and supports that address the inequities experienced by Indigenous peoples, including in education.

This work utilized a qualitative research design that highlighted lived experience to bring together the voices of twelve educators working in publicly-funded schools in Manitoba to explore their understandings of Indigenous and settler relationships and social conflict in Canada. This dissertation combined insights from settler colonial theory and critical theory together to explore how the participants – those actively working within the education system for reconciliation, conceptualized the relationships between social groups in a settler colonial context; how they understand reconciliation; the barriers that exist in their work as educators; and how they believe education *as* reconciliation can be embodied and materialized. Participants in this project highlighted the deep divisions and asymmetries that exist in the social relations between Indigenous peoples and settlers in Manitoba, rooted in structural inequities and destructive stories and myths. Participants described the crucial importance of reconciliation as a long journey to improve social relationships between Indigenous and settler communities. Throughout the findings and at multiples junctures, participants highlighted the

need for research, practice, education, and public dialogue that helps people "make connections" demonstrating how settler colonial structures of oppression have become naturalized and invisibilized. Indeed, it is only through the truthful examination of the conditions of oppression, that we can lead to solutions (Memmi, 1969).

Education has the potential to act as an embodiment of reconciliation, however there are a number of barriers in place – neoliberalism, white supremacy, anti-Indigenous racism and white privilege, poverty, and a lack of political will exist at the systemic level. The settler status quo also serves as a major limiting factor. Participants highlighted the need to for a provincially-mandated Indigenous education curriculum that is built on Indigenous cultures, worldviews, and identities. Such an approach, alongside work to challenge structural inequities offers an opportunity to foreground Indigenous students' success. In doing this work of centring Indigenous knowledges, of providing a more comprehensive and truth account of Canada's past and contemporary relationships with Indigenous peoples, and by emphasizing Indigenous students, education has the opportunity to help equip those 'great questions in life' namely: *Where do I come from? Where am I going? Why am I here?* and *Who am I?* (Sinclair, 2014a, 2014b). Moving forward, there is a need to change paradigms and to challenge the settler colonial status quo. As a crucial point, settler educators and settlers more generally speaking must be open to a process of unsettling if we are to begin to make a marked contribution in the path towards reconciliation, of actively work towards repairing relationships, and building just and equitable relationships with Indigenous peoples.

Limitations

In spite of the strengths of this project, it is not without its limitations. Perhaps most crucial for the purpose of this study is that I was not able to enact and embody a more community-based research project as I originally envisioned, owing to my own personal limitations (including my capacities and resources), as well as the bureaucratic regulations (e.g., time in program) of completing a dissertation. Thus, while I relied on qualitative research that I believe captures the experiences of my participants in a respectful and ethical manner, I also recognize that given my space and place in a settler colonial context including the colonizing dynamics of academia and mainstream research, this study could have been much more meaningful had I worked more with Indigenous communities, to undertake a project that is more rooted in what communities would see as valued and necessary. Moreover, while I can surmise that participants found their participation in the project to be interesting, with many of them sharing that they found the experience worthwhile, it would be a stretch to assert that the research was deeply meaningful to participants and to the broader communities of which they are a part.

Also clearly apparent is the limitations in terms of diversity of the sample. While I did not originally set out to interview only those who identified as female, in hindsight I recognize that this project would have been strengthened by broader diversity in terms of sex and gender identity. Moreover, incorporating questions as they relate to gender into the interview guide, as well as frameworks such as Indigenous feminism (Arvin et al., 2013; Green, 2007) and critical race feminism (Blackstock, 2019) into my research design and theoretical underpinnings could have greatly strengthened the project and provided new insights into the role of gender in

education *as* reconciliation. This is crucial given that gender has been both dramatically under-theorized in transitional justice literature, as well as neglected in transitional justice processes and practices (Grey & James, 2016; Porter, 2016).

The settler imaginary as I have presented focuses predominantly on the settler-Indigenous binary relation. However, given the changing society in which we live, settler colonialism does not exclusively operate around the settler-Indigenous binary relation, but rather a triad including the white settler, chattel slaves/arrivants, Indigenous peoples (T. L. King, 2019; Pearson, 2002; Tuck & Yang, 2014). Accounting for this changing and growing set of relations in the settler colonial nation-state will be crucial for any research moving forward, bringing forward multiple voices to understand the ways in which social groups operate beyond the Indigenous-settler binary. Moreover, understanding the nature of hybrid identities within in this context is key.

Finally, while the research participants shared in-depth their experiences living and working in a settler colonial context, I did not have the opportunity to directly observe their experiences and teaching practices, nor that of their colleagues. Participant observation would provide an opportunity to observe behaviours and interactions in the classroom and school environment more broadly speaking, and could provide useful insights and nuance on how education *as* reconciliation is lived and embodied for educators and for students.

Lessons for Peace and Conflict Studies (PACS)

The essentialist and Eurocentric nature of western thought as it pervades research and practice, the resulting ontological (Walker, 2004) and symbolic violence (hooks, 1990b, p. 343) and the role of universities in perpetuating a Eurocentric form of knowledge production and

dissemination have not been fully challenged in the academy (Kovach, 2009, p. 28). The Eurocentric bias that permeates academic scholarship (Battiste & Youngblood Henderson, 2000, p. 133) has inevitably influenced the development of a number of academic disciplines, including PACS.

PACS has failed to engage with the many forms of violence enacted by the neoliberal settler colonial state, its institutions, and by settler society. Despite PACS' encompassing approach to understanding the various forms of violence (e.g., direct and indirect) and manifestations of violence (e.g., physical, structural, symbolic, and cultural), and the ways in which these forms interrelate and intersect (Byrne & Senehi, 2012; Galtung, 1969, 1990a), the dominant PACS literature appears to presume that colonialism is a phenomenon of the past. As such, PACS has remained relatively silent on the violence inherent in settler colonialism and importantly, the role of the settler state in perpetrating oppression against Indigenous peoples. In a brief online review of handbooks and introductory texts in PACS (Barash & Webel, 2013; Jeong, 2000; Maddison, 2016; Oberschall, 2007), there were no references to settler colonialism and in the few cases where settler colonialism is acknowledged, it is limited to the case of the Israeli settler state.

Given the crucial nature of identity and social conflict, PACS could potentially have much to offer in terms of understand, and thus working to address and transform social conflicts. However, the theoretical approaches in PACS presume that pre-existing differences in terms of identity between social groups are necessarily a cause for destructive conflict, without exploring the ways in which identity differences can be in fact constructed and manufactured by the state and its institutions. Given the importance of identity in this project, another

important limitation of the PACS literature is its approach to identity and its failure to capture notions of space, place, and land, so crucial in Indigenous identity and identity formation (Woolford, 2009), as well as key to the settler colonial project (Alfred, 2009a; Tuck & Yang, 2012). Monture-Angus (1999) points to the centrality of land to Indigenous identity, and the need for a respectful relationship with it, stating "identity, as I have come to understand it, requires a relationship with territory (and not a relationship based on control of that territory)" (p. 56). This limitation highlights the ways in which academic discourse, even in fields such as PACS that are committed to exploring issues related to violence and suggesting tools for its transformation, continues to perpetrate ontological and epistemological violence against Indigenous ways of being in the world and processes of identity formation where land is a central component.

Indigenous scholars have led the way in actively challenging and resisting settler colonial processes of domination, while simultaneously restoring and advocating Indigenous knowledges, worldviews, and traditions (Arvin et al., 2013; Battiste, 2000; Hart, 2010; Kovach, 2005, 2009; Mallon, 2012; Simpson, 2011; L. B. Simpson, 2014; Tuhiwai Smith, 2000; Wilson, 2001, 2008). Inspired by this work, and through integrating settler colonial frames that can provide an understanding the extent and consequences of settler colonialism (Byrne, Clarke, & Rahman, 2018) PACS could work to develop a more appropriate and culturally relevant approach to peacebuilding in settler colonial contexts, working towards a 'justpeace' that includes reconciliatory processes, in recognition of local peoples' resistance and resiliency (Chandler, 2017; Lederach, 1997; MacGinty, 2008b).

Where do I come from? Where am I going? Why am I here?* and *Who am I?

This project has been humbling, challenging, and at times, overwhelming. While there are many things I would have done differently, I have attempted to engage in this research as a white settler in a way that is respectful and deeply ethical, with consideration of and the utmost respect to those already doing the work – to the educators that are working within the system and under numerous competing pressures; and to the Indigenous scholars and activists who are struggling against settler colonial systems of domination.

This project has led me to have a great many other questions and a host of other areas of interest. In part owing to my own work with young people in research, I would value the opportunity to engage with students to try to understand these very same issues from their perspectives, to see how they conceptualize settler colonial relations and reconciliation. I am also interested in understanding if young settlers are also less supportive of reconciliation work, as recent surveys suggest of settler adults.

Simpson (2011) notes that Canada must "engage in a decolonization project and a re-education project that would enable government and its citizens to engage with Indigenous peoples in a just and honourable way" (p. 23). Despite the many challenges facing the education system in its work towards education *as* reconciliation, there remains an element of critical hope, in part due to the foundations of the field of education – namely its anticipation of change, and its emphasis on relationality (Tuhiwai Smith et al., 2019, pp. 8-9). These aspects – change and fluidity, alongside relationality, mirrors key elements of Indigenous Education (Tuhiwai Smith et al., 2019, p. 9). While the practical recommendations that flow from this project are rooted in, and are intended to work within the current settler colonial context,

through engaging with the work of Indigenous scholars and activists, and settler allies, I am wondering and imagining how best to transcend the violence so inherent in settler colonialism to begin to build more just and honorable relationships between settlers and Indigenous peoples. American peace scholar John Paul Lederach (2010) believes that the capacity to generate, build, and mobilize the moral imagination – to imagine and generate constructive processes rooted in every life and the challenges of violence while also working to transcend these same violent patterns. Lederach emphasizes the centrality of relationships; the practice of paradoxical curiosity that respects complexity; an openness to, and space for creativity; and the willingness to take risk. To foster the moral imagination, we must crucially understand the dynamics of protracted social conflict, the legacy that violence leaves, and how we can foster social change and transform relationships. I wonder how best to foster paradigm shifts; to transform basic assumptions of what society is really about beyond neoliberal imaginings (Graeber, 2013); and of envisioning schools and other educational spaces as sites for social transformation (Grande, 2004, 2018). I am also left wanting to put in the work to support however I can, Indigenous sovereignty in this land I now call home. And so concludes this project with answers, with many more questions, and with critical hope. And as Indian author and activist Arundathi Roy (2003) stated "another world is not only possible, she is on her way. On a quiet day, if you listen very carefully, you can hear her breathing."

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Appendices

Appendix A: Recruitment Poster

University of Manitoba

Research Participants Needed

Education for Reconciliation: A Critical Exploration

What is the Study About?

To learn from educators in Manitoba about their needs in order to teach for reconciliation. This responds directly to the Calls to Action from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada.

Who can participate?

Educators and policy makers in Winnipeg who are involved or interested in teaching about reconciliation in Canada.

What can you expect?

Participants will take part in an open ended interview session.

This study has been approved by the University of Manitoba's Joint-Faculty Research Ethics Board.

For more information, or to participate, please contact Pauline:

[redacted]

Thesis Advisor: Dr. Maureen Flaherty
Maureen.Flaherty@umanitoba.ca

Appendix B: Open-Ended Interview Guide for Educators

Overview

- Researcher will pay attention to language used, issues raised, worldviews presented.
- All language will be modified to mirror language used by participants

Background Questions

- Can you tell me a little bit about yourself?
    - What was life like where you grew up?

- Can you share with me a little about your time at school?
    - What do you remember most about school?
    - When you think of your schooling as a child, what do you remember about what you were taught about Indigenous peoples in Canada? About the relationships between Indigenous and settlers? About IRSS?
    - When you think about university, what you were taught about Indigenous peoples in Canada? About the relationships between Indigenous and settlers? About IRSS?

- What is your current position?
    - What led you to become a [role of participant]?
    - How long have you been in your current position?
    - What is your teaching philosophy?
    - How would you describe the environment at your workplace?
    - How would you describe the students that you teach?

Life in Canadian Society

- How do you understand reconciliation in Canada?
    - Who do you think benefits from reconciliation?
    - How is your understanding of reconciliation changing?
    - Do you incorporate reconciliation into your teaching?

Education and Reconciliation

- What are some of the challenges you face in your work?

- How do you teach about and describe Indigenous and settler relations in Canada?

- What do you see as a priority in teaching about reconciliation in the classroom?
    - What challenges do you face?
    - What do you feel is missing?
    - What recommendations do you have to settler teachers teaching about reconciliation? To schools in general?

- Can you share a teaching experience in which you were satisfied with the curriculum and your approach to teaching it as it relates to teaching about reconciliation?
    - How do students respond to these teachings? How do parents respond to these teachings?

- How do your colleagues feel about teaching about reconciliation?
- What do you see as a priority in teaching about reconciliation in the classroom?
- What challenges do you face?
- What do you feel is missing?

- Is there anything that we have not talked about that you would like to address?
  - What made you want to participate in this study?
  - What expectations, if any, do you have of this research?

Appendix C: University of Manitoba Research Ethics Board Protocol Approval

UNIVERSITY OF MANITOBA | Research Ethics and Compliance

Human Ethics
208-194 Dafoe Road
Winnipeg, MB
Canada R3T 2N2
Phone +204-474-7122
Email: humanethics@umanitoba.ca

PROTOCOL APPROVAL

TO: **Pauline Tennent** **(Advisor: Maureen Flaherty)**
Principal Investigator

FROM: **Kevin Russell, Chair**
Joint-Faculty Research Ethics Board (JFREB)

[redacted]

Re: **Protocol J2017:023 (HS20617)**
"Education for Reconciliation: A Critical Exploration"

Effective: June 2, 2017 **Expiry:** June 2, 2018

Joint-Faculty Research Ethics Board (JFREB) has reviewed and approved the above research. JFREB is constituted and operates in accordance with the current *Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans*.

This approval is subject to the following conditions:

1. Approval is granted only for the research and purposes described in the application.
2. Any modification to the research must be submitted to JFREB for approval before implementation.
3. Any deviations to the research or adverse events must be submitted to JFREB as soon as possible.
4. This approval is valid for one year only and a Renewal Request must be submitted and approved by the above expiry date.
5. A Study Closure form must be submitted to JFREB when the research is complete or terminated.
6. The University of Manitoba may request to review research documentation from this project to demonstrate compliance with this approved protocol and the University of Manitoba *Ethics of Research Involving Humans*.

Funded Protocols:
- **Please mail/e-mail a copy of this Approval, identifying the related UM Project Number, to the Research Grants Officer in ORS.**

Appendix D: Informed Consent Form

UNIVERSITY OF MANITOBA | Ph.D. Program in Peace and Conflict Studies

Arthur V. Mauro Centre
for Peace and Justice
at St. Paul's College
252-70 Dysart Road
Winnipeg, Manitoba
Canada R3T 2N2
Telephone: (204) 474-6052
Fax: (204) 474-8828

Research Project Title: Education and Reconciliation: A Critical Exploration

Principal Investigator: Pauline Tennent, PhD Candidate
[redacted]

Research Supervisor: Dr. Maureen Flaherty, Assistant Professor, University of Manitoba
Maureen.flaherty@umanitoba.ca
[redacted]

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.

Purpose of Research Study
The purpose of this research study is to explore the role that the education system can play in reconciliation. Specifically, the study aims to understand the needs of Manitoba educators in teaching about reconciliation in Canada. Approximately 15 educators will participate in this study.

Study Procedures
If you participate in this study, you will be asked to participate in an open-ended individual interview session. In this interview, you will be asked to share your experiences as an educator and the ways in which teaching about reconciliation is part of your role. This includes discussing both the challenges and opportunities that you face in your role.

Interviews can take place at the University of Manitoba or at a space in the community, such as in a private room at a public library. It is expected that interviews will take 45-120 minutes to complete. After each interview, the researcher will record field notes describing the interview process.

The interviews will be digitally recorded and transcribed word for word by the researcher. After the interview is completed and transcribed, the researcher will forward you a copy of your interview transcript for review. If you would like to see any changes to your transcript, please notify the researcher within 90 days.

If you know of anyone who may be interested in participating in this project, the researcher kindly requests that you share details about the project to those individuals/groups. The

researcher can provide you with an email about the project if you are interested. However, there is no expectation on behalf of the researcher that you share the project.

Benefits

There are no direct benefits to you from participating in the study. However, it is my hope that the information learned from this study will result in knowledge that can help educators in their work towards reconciliation. By sharing stories of your work, it is hoped that this research will have the capacity to contribute to more equitable relationships and structures within the education system in Winnipeg, Manitoba.

Risks and Discomforts

There are minimal risks for you taking part in this study. However, it is recognized that sharing your experiences can be taxing and that discussing some of the interview questions can lead to feelings of frustration, awkwardness or discomfort. You are not required to address any areas that you believe to be inappropriate or too probing. You are encouraged to discuss any difficult feelings that may arise with the researcher during the debriefing period following your interview, as well as with your support networks. In the event that you find any aspect of the study upsetting, during or after our conversations, I can assist you to find someone with whom you can connect to for support.

Although you are being given the option as to whether or not you would like to have your name and/or identifying information included in the research materials, there is a risk of identification. Even if your identity is disguised to your satisfaction or your statements are anonymized, there is a possibility that those who know of your story and your work may be able to detect your identity. You will have an opportunity to review your transcripts as well as the final work (dissertation, summary documents) resulting from your interview.

Payment for Participation

No compensation will be provided for your participation in this project. A small gift will be presented as a token of appreciation for your participation.

Voluntary Participation and Freedom to Withdraw

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. If you agree to participate, you can refrain from answering any questions that you would prefer to omit. You can request to stop the interview process at any time throughout the interview without consequence.

You can withdraw from this study at any time (until July 2020 – the date this thesis is expected to be defended) by contacting the researcher or research supervisor without explanation or any negative consequences. If you chose not to continue in they study, all data related to your participation will be destroyed.

Confidentiality

As the interviewer, I will know your name and identity. 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. f you wish to have your identity disguised, your name will be replaced with a code number so that no one will be able to identify you. All data including interview transcripts will be stored in a locked cabinet and that electronic data will be password protected.

The findings from this study will be written as a dissertation as well as other means such as summary documents. They may also be presented at conferences or published in a professional journal. All audio recordings will be deleted by December 2020. Transcripts and field notes will be deleted by December 2024.

Although no concrete plans have been made, it is my hope that this data be used in a future research related to reconciliation in Canada. As such, I would like to retain your consent forms for your contact information until December 2024. 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. This would also be subject to approval from a university-based Ethics Board.

Consent
If you agree to each of the following, please place a check mark in the box:

I have read, or had read to me, the details of this consent form:	Yes	☐
	No	☐
My questions have been addressed:	Yes	☐
	No	☐
I agree that this interview will be audio recorded:	Yes	☐
	No	☐

Identification: Please choose one of the following two options:

☐ I would like to be identified by name in the research results/dissertation .
If so, please provide the name that should be used in identification: _____

☐ I would not like to be identified by name in the research results/dissertation. Please keep my identity confidential and remove/disguise all identifying information from my transcription, from any research materials and from the dissertation itself, including any summaries or other methods through which it is disseminated

Research Results:
I would like to review my interview transcripts:
Yes ☐
No ☐

I would like to be contacted in the future regarding possible follow-up projects:
Yes ☐
No ☐

I would like to have a copy of the summary of the project:
Yes ☐
No ☐

My preferred way to receive copies of my transcript and summary of the project is:
Email: ☐

Mail: ☐

Mailing/Email Address: _____

_____

Statement of Consent

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 Joint Faculty Research Ethics Board. If you have any concerns or complaints about this project you may contact any of the above-named persons or the Human Ethics Coordinator at 204-474-7122 or by email at humanethics@umanitoba.ca. 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 _____