

A settler's response to the TRC's Calls to Action: A
research journey towards an inclusive practice

By

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Abstract

This thesis outlines the concepts that informed my critical journey of developing an understanding of what truth and reconciliation with Indigenous peoples of this land requires of me as a person and as an inclusive designer. My thesis is a response to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's (TRC) Calls to Action published in 2015.

My journey is the story of how I become aware of the impact of my settler colonialism; a system which seeks to eliminate and assimilate beliefs and peoples that obstructs its manifestation. I acknowledge the settler colonial worldview is a systemic barrier to building relationships between non-Indigenous and Indigenous peoples. My journey describes how I encounter barriers based on the construct of the "Other" and my attempts to uncover personal, societal and cultural biases. My conclusion is that for reconciliation to begin, a commitment to an ongoing decolonization process is required.

I share my research journey for designers and educators to consider recognising and becoming inclusive of Indigenous peoples, their cultures and extensive knowledge systems within their research and design practices.

Keywords: Truth and reconciliation, research as journey, settler colonialism, Inclusive design.

Acknowledgment

I acknowledge I am on the traditional territory of the Algonquin Anishnaabeg people.

I offer this acknowledgment as a gesture of respect to the Indigenous peoples, past and present, and the lands on which I live, learn and work – stolen lands.

It is my understanding that when on traditional territory one is to follow traditional territory protocol which acknowledges the host community, its peoples, and its territory (Joseph, 2012). However, I have not sought permission to be here as a guest.

I am a settler.

If I am to be accepted on this territory then I am to learn of my obligations and act upon them. As a guest I need inquire about my responsibilities to my hosts, and the protocols and laws that govern the relationship (âpihtawikosisân, 2016).

As a graduate student I acknowledge that settler institutions of knowledge production have ignored Indigenous knowledges, and harmed Indigenous peoples.

Acknowledging the truth is necessary before the possibility of reconciliation.

Dedication

“If research doesn’t change you as a person, then you haven’t done it right”

- Shawn Wilson, *Research is Ceremony: Indigenous Research Methods* (2008)

I extend my gratitude to those, including self, who have been patient as I have struggled to find the shape of a textual work to bring forth this project and overcome my hesitancy to listen to the instinct guiding this journey.

I am cognisant and grateful to the many voices of Indigenous peoples who have spoken and written from academic, experiential, activist, and artistic perspectives; you have all informed my journey. I bear witness to your stories, acts of resistance, and the honour of resilience. This includes peoples of colour and voices of peoples who have been, and are still, dismissed and erased from the world and history of privilege.

I echo the anonymous statement by a non-Indigenous person: “By listening to your story, my story can change. By listening to your story, I can change” (TRC, pg. 20).

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1. Introduction

The starting premise for my major research project (MRP) is the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's (TRC) Calls to Action and the insistence on reconciliation for all. My response is a heuristic and critical journey to unearth the resistance to truth and reconciliation from a personal, societal and systemic perspective. I examine the mechanisms of settler colonialism which have forged and continue to shape the lives and thinking of both non-Indigenous and Indigenous peoples.

To situate the crux of settler colonialism within the project, I include an introductory text from the TRC's Executive Summary of the Final Report:

For over a century, the central goals of Canada's Aboriginal policy were to eliminate Aboriginal governments; ignore Aboriginal rights; terminate the Treaties; and, through a process of assimilation, cause Aboriginal peoples to cease to exist as distinct legal, social, cultural, religious, and racial entities in Canada. The establishment and operation of residential schools were a central element of this policy, which can best be described as "cultural genocide." (TRC, 2015, p. 1)

This is the legacy and history of the nation called Canada that I am a member of.

Arthur Manuel, an influential and respected First Nations political leader, highlights the inherent contradiction between colonization and peace in his article *Are you a Canadian?* (2016). This puts into question the belief of Canada as a nation of peoples that supports diversity and inclusion while promoting peaceful co-existence.

Colonization is a complex relationship but simple to understand if you know that dispossession, dependency and oppression are the consequences that it is designed to produce between the colonizer and the colonized. It is important to understand the United Nations (UN) has condemned colonization in all its manifestations because the moment you dispossess

someone of their land and make him or her dependent upon the colonizer, you create a person willing to fight to be free and independent again. In this way, colonialism is against world peace (Manuel, 2016).

The United Nations (UN) Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues “estimates there are more than *370 million indigenous people* [emphasis added] in some 70 countries worldwide” (UN News, 2007). In the UN announcement for the approval of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, then General Assembly President Sheikha Haya Rashed Al Khalifa emphasized the following situation:

Even with this progress, indigenous peoples still face marginalization, extreme poverty and other human rights violations. They are often dragged into conflicts and land disputes that threaten their way of life and very survival; and, suffer from a lack of access to health care and education. (Al Khalifa, 2007)

Note that Canada was one of the last countries to sign the UN Declaration (in 2016) as it was, and still is, in direct conflict with its ongoing settler colonial concept of land ownership and the ever present mandate of land and resource appropriation.

I acknowledge Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang’s (2012) definition of decolonization as “the repatriation of Indigenous land and life” (p. 21). This speaks directly to the settler colonial often violent dispossession of Indigenous rights to their lands and ways of life connected to their lands (Saul, 2014; Simpson, 2011; Tuhiwai Smith, 2012). The Canadian history of broken Treaty agreements, enforceable removal of children from their families and communities, outlawing of Indigenous use of ceremony and belief systems, and stripping of Indigenous identity are reflections of this dispossession.

One of the early findings of my research project was the challenge, and inadequacy, of using Eurocentric theoretical frameworks to research a problem that was created with the tools born of the same concepts. In contrast, theoretical frameworks located in Indigenous peoples' experiences and epistemologies did provide the methods and tools to effectively name and situate both the problem and solution spaces.

However, I am a non-Indigenous person, and was very weary of misappropriating Indigenous frameworks. To address this apparent conflict, I needed to find theoretical frameworks that did not replicate the settler colonial mandates of oppression and assimilation nor unethically benefit from the appropriation of Indigenous knowledges. For this epistemological shift, I sought to find frameworks that could support both the types of research questions proposed and the process I undertook to find answers.

On this research journey, I listened to the voices of Indigenous peoples tell of what lies at the heart of the discord and describe a way forward of re-storying and restoration. I heard about the resilience and strength of Indigenous peoples, the power of storytelling and humour, and a firm commitment to standing in truth as a necessity to reconciliation. I learned about concepts of truth and reconciliation based on Indigenous legal and ethical principles of respect, relevance, reciprocity and responsibility.

This critical inquiry leads to questions about how researchers and designers perpetuate the settler colonial and Eurocentric models. As inclusive designers, shouldn't we be asking these questions? In my role as a designer, what are my responsibilities towards truth and reconciliation and the Indigenous nations on whose land I live? How can I become conscious of how my principles and practices replicate the disrespect and

harm imbedded in settler colonialism, and what do I need to learn to change both the my views and my practice?

Extending Inclusive Design

In the research journey I undertook for this project, I asked myself how Inclusive Design can support Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities. As an inclusive designer living and working in Canada, I believe there is a responsibility to become informed of the settler colonial history and its ongoing expressions to understand and mitigate its impact on research and design projects.

As a student attending a post-secondary institution that has a principle of decolonization identified in its mandate, there's a responsibility to address the TRC's Calls to Actions as part of one's education and the development of one's practice.

When looking at the intersection of Inclusive Design and elements of Indigenous worldviews I become aware of gaps, such as divergent concepts of knowledge production and ownership, which exclude that which is necessary to include.

I chose to challenge the current concept of inclusion to address the move of Indigenous worldviews and experiences from exclusion to center as a means of calling out the necessity of recognizing and respecting Indigenous ways of knowing. My reasoning is based on the assumption that inclusion infers being "accepted" into a larger collective governed by the dominant group, which begs the question of what is being given up for that "privilege".

By situating the resistance to Indigenous peoples' knowledge systems, including theoretical frameworks and the worldviews and experiences of Indigenous peoples, at the center of this project's discussion my hope is to encourage the extension and development of a more respectful and inclusive model. My proposition that the rich and complex Indigenous peoples' knowledge systems, with its distinct epistemologies and methods, need be treated as distinct, valid, equal and worthy of respect..

This specific move to center counteracts the ongoing Canadian erasure and assimilation projects of absorbing Indigenous nations and their peoples, their worldviews and myriad knowledge systems into the body politic.

There is also a critical need to counter concepts that promote the "metaphorization of decolonization makes possible a set of evasions, or "settler moves to innocence", that problematically attempt to reconcile settler guilt and complicity, and rescue settler futurity". (Tuck and Yang, 2012, p. 1)

I cite the authors' description of the "settler moves to innocence" which points to my role as a settler scholar reminding me to be weary of complicity in settler moves:

Those strategies or positionings that attempt to relieve the settler of feelings of guilt or responsibility without giving up land or power or privilege, without having to change much at all. In fact, settler scholars may gain professional kudos or a boost in their reputations for being so sensitive or self-aware. Yet settler moves to innocence are hollow, they only serve the settler. (Tuck and Yang, 2012, p. 10)

2. MRP motivation

“Reconciliation is not an Aboriginal problem; it is a Canadian one. Virtually all aspects of Canadian society may need to be reconsidered.” (TRC, vi, 2015)

With rise of Idle No More and other Indigenous movements such as Defenders of the Land, there are complex questions being raised and contentious conversations heard in the public sphere of awareness. Since the TRC’s Calls to Action, there have been public gestures and initiatives begun to acknowledge and make a commitment to engage in reconciliation. However there are noticeable gaps that raise fundamental questions about the nature of truth in the context of a process of reconciliation.

For people living in Canada to understand the issues at heart, there’s a pressing need to learn the truth of the shared history of the First Peoples, the Indigenous nations and its peoples, and the Canadian nation. There’s a lack of acknowledgment and understanding of the Treaties between the Crown and the Indigenous nations and how those mutual agreements have shaped the history of the land and its peoples’ stories.

Note that Treaties are nation to nation agreements recognized under international law which define the responsibilities of each nation and its peoples to the agreements. As members of the Canadian nation, we agreed to mutual respect and reciprocity, non-interference in each other’s governance and mutual land stewardship.

We are all treaty people.

The Canadian nation and its peoples have not honoured their responsibilities. A commitment to truth and reconciliation requires acknowledgment of this failure, restitution for harms done and discussions about land – Indigenous concepts of land.

“Settler colonizers come to stay: invasion is a structure not an event” (as quoted in Wolfe, 2006). At the core of the settler colonial belief system is the construct of a racial and religious superiority which was historically created and is still used to serve the intentions of colonization (TRC Report, 2015; Saul, 2014). This shapes the Canadian nation and its peoples’ view of self, manifested in the physical and virtual communities we participate in, often persisting a misrepresentation of Indigenous peoples in our “national” stories (King, 2012; Francis, 2011; Kinew, 2012).

To understand the settler colonial system’s mechanisms, one must consider its history and how knowledge creation shapes and is shaped by its institutions and practices. Linda Tuhiwai Smith, a Māori scholar discusses these topics in her seminal book *Decolonizing Methodologies* (2012). The statement “They Came, They Saw, They Named, They Claimed” (Tuhiwai Smith, p. 83) captures the essence of how knowledge constructs are born and disseminated via settler colonial and imperial systems.

And so the settler story becomes history, at the expense of Indigenous peoples.

There is a long colonial history of promoting a construct or image of Indigenous peoples that bears little resemblance to the actual history or the peoples alive today. Representations of Indigenous peoples are institutionalized which contributes to the systematic silencing of Indigenous peoples’ voices and cultures, and at times their very bodies, while promoting a settler colonial agenda of land and resource acquisition.

However, there are insistent Indigenous and non-Indigenous voices countering these deeply engrained perceptions and machinations that offer tools to deconstruct these false representations and the settler colonial systems persistence to perpetuate them. These collective mythologies are layered deep into the Canadian settler psyche and their dismantling will require a similarly deep extraction.

3. Purpose

The purpose of this major research project (MRP) is to research and develop a design opportunity in response to the TRC's Calls to Action for reconciliation.

I recognize there is a need to engage in dialogue, listen and develop respectful relationships with Indigenous peoples as a pre-requisite to a process of reconciliation. Of note, there is a lack of knowing about the diverse and different Indigenous nations and their peoples and their extensive knowledge systems including governance and legal systems. This impacts what activities can embody the process of truth and reconciliation. The TRC Report indicates there is challenging work to do in the difficult process of educating self, communities, newcomers to the land and institutions.

My initial design proposal was to develop a collaborative tool or set of tools to inform people about the land history from Indigenous perspectives. As stories are powerful tools for starting conversations and forging new relationships, my goal was to use stories as a design framework for truth and reconciliation activities. The medium of storytelling was chosen to bring forth stories, songs, art, performances, walks, or music making inviting people to share their own stories.

The question of whose stories created new questions that troubled me – if these were Indigenous peoples’ stories then what was my role and what about appropriation and misrepresentation? Where or how did non-Indigenous stories fit in or would their inclusion undermine the project’s purpose by simply replicating the settler colonial story at the expense of Indigenous peoples? What about newcomers and their stories?

These questions bump straight into the quagmire of cultural appropriation.

Jesse Wente, is a well-known Ojibwe film critic and columnist who advocates for the Indigenous arts. In the National Speakers Bureau summary profile of Wente, I find a statement that speaks directly to issues of appropriation and representation. “He [Wente] draws attention to the imagery used by Hollywood in portrayals of indigenous peoples and *stresses the need for a culture to have influence on their own depiction* [emphasis added]” (National Speakers Bureau, 2017).

In a recent controversial and well-publicized event, Jesse Wente spoke out about the meaning and impact of appropriation, free speech and the link to storytelling. In an interview with Matt Galloway on CBC Radio's Metro Morning, Wente shares the following which I’ve quoted at length:

What we are, instead, is divided, largely by rhetorical arguments that conflate notions of free speech with cultural appropriation while disguising the very distinct histories of these two things. We have to understand that cultural appropriation is institutionalized; it is the very foundation of what Canada is built on. And not just cultural appropriation, but appropriation of all things Indigenous: our lives, our lands. This is what this nation was founded on. It was the policy of the government to do this. To ignore, to pretend now, that we somehow have moved on beyond this and that somehow we're all on equal footing and thus we can all share equitably *is to fail in your responsibility as a storyteller* [emphasis added].

None of us that I've seen want to limit free speech. I wish there were so many more stories written about Indigenous people. *But those stories come with responsibility.* Indigenous people know this all too well, we are beholden to our communities. *When we say these things, we know exactly who will hold us responsible* [emphasis added]. Who is that for non-Indigenous writers, when they don't have these connections to the community? Do they truly understand the reason that these stories are sacred? (CBC, 2017)

When I began the in depth research for my initial design proposal I became aware of a deep discomfort and sense of confusion about how to proceed with the work I sketched out for myself. The realization that reconciliation was not an Indigenous problem but a settler problem made me confront my part in the problem. To move forward, I first needed to figure out how I could become part of the solution.

Research Questions

The original design goal was to imagine and propose a public facing project(s) to a population of all ages coming historically from many nations with the purpose of informing people about the land history from Indigenous perspectives. This design proposal was a response to the following questions:

- Following the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's Calls to Action, what does reconciliation look like for people living on this land?
- We are all treaty people and responsible. How do we honor our responsibility?

The original research focus changed when I came to the realisation that I first needed to research and develop an understanding of what the Canadian problem of reconciliation was about. This was my responsibility; as a settler, as a researcher and

as a designer and a necessary first step before engaging with Indigenous peoples on a research and design project. The research questions that emerged are as follows:

- As an individual and an inclusive designer, what are my responsibilities towards reconciliation?
- How can I become conscious of how my principles and practices replicate the disrespect and harm imbedded in a settler colonial worldview, and what do I need to learn to change and evolve research and design practices?

Methodology

To become responsible towards reconciliation, I began an immersive research process having faith that in time I would grasp what the settler problem was. Hence began what I finally recognized and named as a heuristic and critical research journey.

No formal literature review was conducted for this project. The research journey led me to Indigenous writings and interviews that speak to and about the settler colonial system and its impact, its mechanisms and countering it through a decolonizing process. It became obvious that the settler colonial worldview was a systemic barrier to building relationships between Indigenous people and non-Indigenous people.

I conducted an environmental scan to map the research, document the research sources used, categorize the findings, and gather the results into themes that revealed both my research journey process and findings based on the original questions first proposed and others exposed in the research process.

With this in mind, I wanted to document my journey as a starting premise to developing a design and research practice that is inclusive of Indigenous peoples.

TRC Calls to Action

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada findings and Summary of the Final Report include ninety-four (94) Calls to Action which served as original guides for my MRP's problem definition:

Royal Proclamation and Covenant of Reconciliation

45. We call upon the Government of Canada, on behalf of all Canadians, to jointly develop with Aboriginal peoples a Royal Proclamation of Reconciliation to be issued by the Crown. The proclamation would build on the Royal Proclamation of 1763 and the Treaty of Niagara of 1764, and reaffirm the nation-to-nation relationship between Aboriginal peoples and the Crown.

Museums and Archives

68. We call upon the federal government, in collaboration with Aboriginal peoples, and the Canadian Museums Association to mark the 150th anniversary of Canadian Confederation in 2017 by establishing a dedicated national funding program for commemoration projects on the theme of reconciliation.

Commemoration

83. We call upon the Canada Council for the Arts to establish, as a funding priority, a strategy for Indigenous and non-Indigenous artists to undertake collaborative projects and produce works that contribute to the reconciliation process.

Newcomers to Canada

93. We call upon the federal government, in collaboration with the national Aboriginal organizations, to revise the information kit for newcomers to Canada and its citizenship test to reflect a more inclusive history of the diverse Aboriginal peoples of Canada, including information about the Treaties and the history of residential schools.

As my MRP research deepened, the following Calls to Action came into focus:

43) We call upon federal, provincial, territorial, and municipal governments to fully adopt and implement the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* as the framework for reconciliation.

47) We call upon federal, provincial, territorial, and municipal governments to repudiate concepts used to justify European sovereignty over Indigenous peoples and lands, such as the *Doctrine of Discovery* and *terra nullius*, and to reform those laws, government policies, and litigation strategies that continue to rely on such concepts.

62) We call upon the federal, provincial, and territorial governments, in consultation and collaboration with Survivors, Aboriginal peoples, and educators, to:

ii. Provide the necessary funding to post-secondary institutions to educate teachers on how to integrate Indigenous knowledge and teaching methods into classrooms.

iii. Provide the necessary funding to Aboriginal schools to utilize Indigenous knowledge and teaching methods in classrooms.

86) We call upon Canadian journalism programs and media schools to require education for all students on the history of Aboriginal peoples, including the history and legacy of residential schools, the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*, Treaties and Aboriginal rights, Indigenous law, and Aboriginal–Crown relations.

92) We call upon the corporate sector in Canada to adopt *the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* as a reconciliation framework and to apply its principles, norms, and standards to corporate policy and core operational activities involving Indigenous peoples and their lands and resources.

This would include, but not be limited to, the following:

i. Commit to meaningful consultation, building respectful relationships, and obtaining the free, prior, and informed consent of Indigenous peoples before proceeding with economic development projects.

iii. Provide education for management and staff on the history of Aboriginal peoples, including the history and legacy of residential schools, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Treaties and Aboriginal rights, Indigenous law, and Aboriginal–Crown relations. This will require skills-based training in intercultural competency, conflict resolution, human rights, and anti-racism.

I've deemed it necessary to include these Calls as they encapsulate threads within my research journey. A careful reading and critical reflection on these directives and their meaning does offer a clear pathway to decolonizing and reconciliation.

4. Scope

Initial Research and Findings

Indigenous research methodologies are informed by Indigenous worldviews and were proposed as the basis for the original project's research theoretical framework. My readings of the works of Indigenous scholars and educators such as Shawn Wilson, Kate Absolon and Cam Willett, and Leanne Betasamosake Simpson as well as research guidelines such as the Government of Canada's Interagency Advisory Panel on Research Ethics TCPS 2 - Chapter 9: Research Involving First Nations, Inuit and Métis Peoples of Canada and its deference to Indigenous ethical guidelines, helped develop a grounding in Indigenous research methodologies and knowledge systems.

In the work of Indigenous scholars such as Linda Tuhiwai Smith I started discovering a legacy of misrepresentation, disrespect, persistent and ongoing harm, and a lack of free, prior and informed consent (FPIC). There was and still is a distrust of research conducted with the Eurocentric tools of settler colonialism. This extended to academia as Western knowledge production dismissed and erased Indigenous epistemologies and traditional knowledges. As I later discovered, this distrust created challenges for Indigenous researchers wanting to work within their own communities or with other Indigenous peoples even when the research could benefit the participants.

These findings highlighted the inevitable issues in the research approach to this project. How and where does a privileged settler fit into a research project that seeks to develop a respectful relation to Indigenous systems of knowledge and research epistemologies? Furthermore if the Eurocentric/Western knowledge production was part

of the problem, how could one justify using those epistemologies to research the project when seemingly it would just replicate the issues it was trying to deconstruct?

With my original focus on story I recognized the guidance of Indigenous elders, knowledge keepers and educators was necessary. Traditionally stories exist in a relational context and are linked to land and place. Storytelling is an oral traditional teaching method that equally includes both the story's telling and meaning making. Listeners are not passive as story develops critical thinking, engages complex and often divergent points of view which challenges understanding. Stories are adapted to the context and the situation depending on the teachings and the listeners. Stories are also a teaching method for sharing and transmitting the extensive and complex knowledges in Indigenous families, communities and nations. Laws are told in stories. There are sacred stories and stories that belong to families and nations. The sharing of these sacred stories is not public and should not appear in a public space. (Sium and Ritskes, 2013; MacLean and Wason-Ellam, 2006)

In light of all this information I had to rethink my approach to the project if I was going to continue, which I felt was necessary as the Calls to Action requesting non-Indigenous Canadians to engage with reconciliation were insistent. I had made a commitment during the Skills for Solidary online workshops in the summer of 2014 so it was time to tackle the tough subjects. This required I take an unflinching look at my expose my settler colonial self and the role of privilege in my life, and how this impacted my research and design practices.

Research Framework Challenges

This project has been through multiple iterations and attempts to define what the research questions were, what theoretical frameworks fit the project, and what format the research and its findings could take. The most tenacious element to defy clarity was defining how the project fit into an academic design project model.

I have conducted research over the years for projects in varied work, volunteer and educational environments yet was daunted by the formal graduate academic project models and terminologies, and my lack of experience working with such. The subject matter at the heart of the project also required careful consideration.

In many ways this is ironic as when I look back on research I have done where I have simply reached out and engaged with people simply knowing they had the expertise and knowledge based on their experiences. And if they didn't; I moved on thanking them for their contribution. I saw the interaction as collaboration with people, groups or organizations in a partnership to ensure whatever was being shared and implemented was done with respect and recognition of those providing the information.

This major research project felt very different. I was uncomfortable and self-conscious about my ignorance – which I now know as the guilt and complicity I sensed as a member of the dominant settler colonial group. I came to recognize I was blind to my privilege as a member of the dominant race and didn't perceive the mechanisms of colorblindness in my worldview. I observed bias and discrimination in self (at times) and around me, and had lived experience as a female and as a French-Canadian. My sense having being oppressed without acknowledging my contribution to oppression is an

example of my settler move to innocence. It has taken me a considerable period of time to claim this which contributed to the fact I wasn't fully cognisant of the experiences that Indigenous individuals, communities and nations lived daily and the intergenerational trauma due to the Canadian settler colonial system's impact on their lives

There is substantial evidence of the harms and negative impacts of externally driven research on Indigenous people (Tuhiwai Smith, 2012; First Nations Information Governance Centre, 2014). The Indigenous principles of Ownership, Control, Access and Possession (OCAP) were developed in 2007 by the National Aboriginal Health Organization as a response to a history based on oppressive and exploitative research. These principles provide a model to ensure the research is developed in a respectful and responsible manner based on Indigenous ethical principles. A focus is placed on how research can benefit community and persons as members of communities:

OCAP is not a doctrine or a prescription. It is a set of principles that reflect First Nation commitments to use and share information in a way that brings benefit to the community while minimizing harm. It is also an expression of First Nation jurisdiction over information about the First Nation. (First Nations Information Governance Centre, 2014, p. 4-5)

In my research I discovered that distinct Indigenous communities and nations have legal and ethical practices and protocols related to concepts of mutual benefit and reciprocity. These principles are based in ontologies of relationality which includes land.

Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2007, 2012) has written extensively about research and Indigenous peoples. The following situates a pressing concern that speaks directly to mutual benefit and the glaring lack of such in the market economy of globalization:

The topic of biotechnology and the patenting of human life forms is significant because it brings into very sharp focus what the extreme implications of a market economy are about; indigenous bodies and their cell lines. This seems scarier than the exploitation of images and art forms but it is part of the same process of commodification of traditional indigenous knowledge because it literally commodifies our biology in ways that attack the very existence of indigenous peoples. This is not about all things being equal and that every one's cell lines are up for study – this is about the powerlessness of groups and communities around the world whose bodies are viewed as potential commodities. (Smith, 2007)

It was obvious that a theoretical framework and set of tools was required that would approach this project with respect and humility. I required a way to encapsulate the project's process, questions and findings and more succinctly discover a framework that was the best fit, or fit into, the goal of exposing and counteracting my settler assumptions within the larger colonial system. This search became part of the project.

Research Scope

The scope of research is multifold. Its shape is more akin to experiencing the landscape that I live in without a local knowledge of the land, waters or inhabitants. One path is to unearth the barriers that inform my worldview and influence my participation in acts of truth and reconciliation. Another path is to story the research journey using epistemologies and theoretical frameworks that are respectful of Indigenous perspectives while walking on the higher education academia path as a settler.

To situate Indigenous concepts within the project, I introduce the following:

We are of the opinion that neutrality and objectivity do not exist in research, since all research is conducted and observed through human epistemological lenses. Therefore, we advocate that location is essential to Indigenous methodologies and Aboriginal research / world view / epistemologies." (Absolon and Willett, 2005, p. 97)

To do this, situation of 'self' is needed to establish my positionality. My location includes my positionality and contextualises this work. One of the challenges I discovered early in this project was how to locate myself within the research to understand what I could contribute to existing conversations as a settler. How and where does a settler fit into a research project that seeks to develop a respectful relation to Indigenous systems of knowledge and research epistemologies? My settler position requires that I situate myself in the research that explores Indigenous peoples' knowledge systems and attempts to change an oppressive system that I participate in.

Storytelling is intrinsic to Indigenous research methods and pedagogical practices based on the concept of non-interference. This is integral to the concept that individuals and children are capable and responsible of forming their own perspectives. Absolon and Willett (2005) discuss how they "rely on the intelligence and imagination of readers to draw their own interpretations and conclusions about the role and purpose of putting ourselves forward [location] in research" (Absolon and Willett, 2005, p. 98).

Shawn Wilson speaks to this concept in his book *Research is Ceremony: Indigenous Research Methods* (2008) when he talks about the importance of introducing the storyteller (as opposed to researcher/author) as culturally appropriate for Indigenous peoples and how Indigenous research paradigms support a holistic approach to information use and transmission (Wilson, p. 32).

Indigenous people in Canada recognize that it is important for storytellers to impart their own life and experience into the telling. They also recognize that listeners will filter the story being told through their own experience and adapt the information to make it relevant and specific to their life (Wilson, 2008, p. 32).

It's important to introduce the ethic of non-interference as it informs Indigenous pedagogy and social interaction models as well as governance and legal frameworks encountered in discussions of restorative justice and the Treaties. I borrow from the 1999 *Report of the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry of Manitoba* produced by the Public Inquiry into the Administration of Justice and Aboriginal People to explain:

The ethic of non-interference "promotes positive interpersonal relationships by discouraging coercion of any kind, be it physical, verbal or psychological". It stems from a high degree of respect for every individual's independence and regards interference or restriction of a person's personal freedom as "undesirable behaviour".

The importance of the ethic of non-interference helps to explain the use of stories in Aboriginal societies. If advice is given, it is usually in the form of a story. It lays out a situation with options. The advice is contained in the story and the listener is free to understand it as he or she wants to, and to act or to not act on that advice accordingly. (Ethic of Non-Interference, Government of Manitoba, 1999)

By reading and listening to Indigenous scholars and educators, my goal is to develop respectful relationships with the voices and information I encounter. Indigenous cultural knowledges, and its production, use a different approach and have a different purpose from Eurocentric-based paradigms. In Shawn Wilson's article *What is Indigenous Research Methodology?* (2001) he explains the following differences:

- The dominant western research paradigm is built on the belief that knowledge may be owned by an individual
- An Indigenous paradigm comes from the fundamental belief that knowledge is relational

- Because this relationship is shared and mutual, ideas or knowledge cannot be owned or discovered (Wilson, 2001, p 176-177)

This in and of itself is a vast epistemological shift. How does one approach the gap this creates? One of the potential options is to situate knowledge production.

In *Becoming an Anti-Oppressive Researcher* (2005), Karen Potts and Leslie Brown define how knowledge production intersects with anti-oppressive research:

From an anti-oppressive perspective, knowledge does not exist in and of itself, isolated from people. Rather, it is produced through the interactions of people, and as all people are socially located (in their race, gender, ability, class identities, and so on) with biases, privileges, and differing power relations, so too is the creation of knowledge socially located, socially constructed... in anti-oppressive research, we are not looking for a “truth”; we are looking for meaning, for understanding, for the power to change. (Potts & Brown, 2005, p.261)

Another option is to act upon “Tuhiwai Smith’s call for the decolonization of knowledge and the processes of knowledge acquisition” and ask “questions about who knowledge is created for, how it is created, and for what purposes” (Brown and Strega, 2005, p. 4). I see the integration of this approach as beneficial to an Inclusive Design practice as it is inclusive of Indigenous knowledge acquisition and production.

Limitations

There is an inherent challenge of being a settler in a space that seeks to research and understand what it means to be part of a settler colonial culture that contributes to the ongoing systemic exclusion and erasure of Indigenous peoples.

While indigenous research methodologies and Indigenous voices are slowly gaining recognition in non-Indigenous research circles there is still resistance to their equal and respectful inclusion in the world of research and academia (Tuhiwai Smith, 2012; Wilson, 2008; Kovach, 2005). The Eurocentric bias runs deep and while the project's goal is not to directly address this issue I do point it out. However, to address research and design solution spaces in response to the TRC's recommendations I see no better suited methodologies for acknowledging the problem space and providing a way of engaging with the need of reconciliation. Anti-oppression and decolonizing research provide effective ways to deconstruct our ongoing settler colonial worldview.

Originality

My research journey is a mapping of my personal experiences and reflections in coming to a basic understanding of mechanisms that shape the dominant society I live in and am a member of, and its ongoing destruction and erasure of Indigenous peoples, cultures and knowledges. For this project, my contribution to truth and reconciliation is to first recognize my part in the Canadian problem and identify how my settler colonial biases and perceptions impact my design approach and practices.

5. Inquiry Frameworks

Positionality - Who am I

"Location is about relationships to land, language, spiritual, cosmological, political, economical, environmental, and social elements in one's life." (Absolon and Willett, 2005, p. 98)

For situate myself in this project, I need to establish my positionality. I am a tenth generation French settler and on my mother's side I am a third generation English/Welsh settler to what is known today as Canada. As an able-bodied white heterosexual settler woman, I recognize that I benefit from settler colonialism and have an unearned privileged identity. I acknowledge that I, as a member of the dominant and oppressor group, contribute to the silencing of Indigenous peoples' presence and voices, and their relationship to the land.

In many ways discovering my positionality acted as a guide informing how I responded to my original research questions and goals, and how I discovered the gaps and my settler colonial self along the way. One of the critical threads interlaced with the concept of positionality is the necessity of self-reflexivity. This requires consciously and critically bringing into awareness how my position influences my research questions, my research path, decisions, what I pay attention to and maybe more importantly what I dismiss, what I consider findings, and the interpretation and presentation of my findings. However this doesn't guarantee that bias and privilege aren't operative factors, hence seeing this project as a slice in an ongoing journey that I chose to enact in my daily life as I recognize that my settler colonialism is bone deep.

For this study, I attempt to locate myself in respect of Indigenous research traditions I am learning about. Even though I am not conducting personal direct research with Indigenous communities or individual members of communities, this research project is my response to encounters with primarily Indigenous bloggers, journalists, scholars, writers, and interviews with peoples speaking about a vast array of topics specific to Indigenous knowledges and experiences. As such, I want to locate

myself in the research relationships I am accountable to and understand how to fulfill my obligations. With these considerations, I ask: is it possible to respectfully weave in elements of Indigenous epistemologies, or praxis, into the journey framework and introduce the concepts I am learning about? If I were to meet a person whose work I have interacted with in this paper, would I be comfortable with what I have shared?

Relationality is a core concept of Indigenous worldviews, and extends to research projects. In *Research as Ceremony*, (2008) Shawn Wilson speaks of relational accountability as a base concept of Indigenous axiology. He explains how “Indigenous paradigm comes from the foundational belief that knowledge is relational. Knowledge is shared with all creation.” (Wilson, p. 74) The author goes on to describe how the researcher is accountable to all their relations in a research relationship, and not separate from the subject of the research. Wilson shares “the knowledge that the researcher interprets must be respectful of and help to build relationships that have been established through the process of finding out information” (p. 77).

These statements serve to clarify how my positionality is situated within the larger context of research as an act of resistance. I view my responsibility as a person and member of communities, inclusive designer and researcher to respect Indigenous worldviews and knowledges, intentionally create relevant and respectful work, and want to contribute with reciprocity to the well-being of all relations in a good way.

Situating my story

I choose to introduce the story of my contact with Indigenous peoples and their cultures within my larger life journey prior to this project. This provides another dimension to locate myself relative to my reflections along my research journey.

My childhood experiences include being brought to a reserve at age of 3 or 4 and being confused at why the kids' lives were different from mine. I remember thinking it wasn't fair. This memory sticks in my mind when most fade. We lived in Baie Comeau, Québec, and I imagine the reserve in question belonged to the Pessamit Innu Band. It was then called Bersimis for the river that ran into the larger and salt water St. Lawrence River. I don't know if my father was aware of residential schools. I suspect he may have thought that Native people were unjustly treated. As a child he was sent away to a Jesuit boarding school in Montréal for years and only saw his family in the summer.

I remember books and stories in our home and seeing the art of Native peoples, and my early sense of place and link to land and water – possibly a first experience of identifying with the Imaginary Indian of childhood (Francis, p. 157). This doesn't change my sense of closeness to land and place yet contextualizes notions I already had of Native peoples at that point of my young life. Inuit people came to our home that my Mum worked with though I don't recall in what capacity and I still have a sealskin ootpik (Ukpik) given to me by a man I recall as named Johnny Snowball.

I had a teacher – possibly a priest – in grade 7 or 8 religious education class say something to the effect that Native people were sub-human. I stood up and spoke out disagreeing with him and was thrown out of class. I can't remember whether I had

Native classmates or friends though I had to speak out which is surprising as I was painfully shy and wanted at all costs to fit into “English” school since being moved from French school in grade 5. Note that French people were not seen as equals in the English world and its establishments. This was complicated by having an English-speaking mother and my feeling confused as to what my heritage was. Again this speaks to my identification with Imaginary Indians; I felt they knew who they were.

I remember the Oka uprising and other Kanien'kehá:ka (Mohawk) incidents around Montréal. I sided with the Native peoples without really understanding the issues at heart though I knew it was about the land and the disrespect of sacred sites.

Growing up my parents were avid readers, and listened to music which I see now as related to the Civil Rights movement and suspect I learned about racism quite young. I remember being upset at my English grandmother's view of people of color and as a teenager and young adult reading about racism to try and understand its manifestations. I was angry at the sense of privilege white English people had yet I was half English.

I read about Indigenous peoples across the world through the lenses of anthropology, art, story and history including documentaries yet even if I knew there was discrimination I still saw it via a settler lens without the resistance or benefit of learning directly from Indigenous peoples about their experiences and perspectives.

In the early 1990's I went to Mexico and ended up helping teach kids art with a Mexican man who had done street work with kids in Mexico City. Many of the kids who wanted to come were Mayan and their parents wouldn't let them even though their parents sold arts & crafts for a living. I remember talking to the Mayan and Aztec people

I met to hear about their experiences and worldviews. When I travelled to San Cristobal de Las Casas in Chiapas by bus through the mountains and rain forest one could feel the tension and witness signs of uprising of the Indigenous peoples there. On the trip armed guerrillas stopped and came onto the bus and as the only white person I thought I might have met my end. After they got off the bus one of Mayan grandmothers turned, nodded and acknowledged me – I had the distinct sense I had been protected.

I went to college in Cornwall with Kanien'kehá:ka (Mohawk) students from Akwesasne and was asked to work with them at the Mohawk casino on U.S. side. I got to know one of the students, and knew bits about his clan & some of the work they did with the clan youth to counter the challenging circumstances they lived with. I met an Indigenous woman on a train who worked with traumatized youth and we kept in touch for years. I went to events with Native peoples speaking of their spirituality and how it was instrumental in overcoming their struggles. There was Indigenous staff with the company I worked first worked for when I moved to Ottawa whom I exchanged with whenever I had the opportunity. One of them used to say I was part Mohawk and just didn't know it. There has been talk of Native people in my French-Canadian heritage (wonder if this coincided with the “wannabe” Indian phenomenon – another settler move to innocence) as my first settler ancestors arrived in the 1650s. It is a possibility yet it is not my lived experience nor do I assume one can just decide to “become an Indian”.

After I moved to Ottawa in 2000, I started attending spiritual powwow events in Kitigan Zibi led by the Elder Grandfather Commanda. Even though I respected the experiences and mostly the Indigenous peoples, there was that uncomfortable gap and I wondered about being a “white tourist’ with no real understanding of Indigenous

worldviews. I was invited to attend Indigenous events in the city but chose not to. Maybe it was just my settler pride of wanting to “know”. Nevertheless I especially made a point of seeing Indigenous art and reading what information I came across about Indigenous peoples and subjects to try and understand what the gap I felt was about.

In the last few years I started paying more attention to Indigenous issues (Idle no More, Defenders of the Land, pipelines and land claims, and events / news stories) and in the summer of 2014 I enrolled in a 5 part series called “Skills for Solidarity” hosted by the LeadNow.ca team. This online, introductory program starts a conversation about the shared history between Indigenous Peoples and non-Indigenous Peoples in Canada, and ways to renew the relationship between nations. This experience was enriching yet made me confront how very little I knew. In many ways this is where this journey began.

The Skills for Solidarity introduced terms and concepts that I wasn’t aware of and was faced with my ignorance and settler blindness. At that point I made a decision to do the tough learning even though I was at a loss of how to do so. I made a commitment to get informed about Indigenous peoples’ concerns that reflected their voices.

I attended John Ralston Saul’s November 2014 book launch “The Comeback: How Aboriginals Are Reclaiming Power and Influence” where Indigenous people spoke with the ceremonial blessing given by an elder I recognized from Grandfather Commanda’s gatherings. The book gave me an understanding of Canada’s settler colonial history, key issues and the relationship to current issues. In May of 2015 I had the opportunity to participate in the Walk for Reconciliation with Residential School Survivors which was a powerful experience. I started following local events related to

the Chaudière Falls and the contested islands on the unceded Algonquin territory that I currently live on. Since then I have attended public events, conferences and workshops related to the Anishnaabeg in the Outaouais region, the Kumik Elders Lodge, reconciliation events and Project of the Heart.

Last fall, I discovered a drumming circle near my house and decided to go. I was welcomed and participated in ceremony, singing and drumming. I had the opportunity to work with an Indigenous drum-maker and made my own drum. I look forward to going back to the circle to participate, learning about songs and the teachings/learnings that go with the drumming and the songs. I miss being there and have missed being involved with Indigenous events during my studies even if at times it's uncomfortable.

Sharing my story allows the reader to situate me in this research project. It contextualizes self within my story and the larger Canadian story to show relations to both past experiences and ones encountered in the project.

Research as Journey

Since childhood I have had relationships with Indigenous peoples, yet there was a gap — an uncomfortable space I witnessed and sensed yet couldn't explain or know how to begin to address. I knew it was related to what I had described as a "white" world yet lacked the awareness and knowledge to weave the threads of understanding together to create a critical picture of how a "white" view functioned, how it influenced my lived experience and more importantly how it impacted Indigenous peoples.

I now admit my lack of commitment to unearthing what and how a “white view” worked and how I embodied it. Even in my strong disagreement with what I perceived as “whiteness”, I didn’t see the extent of how the color of my skin favoured my location and created a situation of unequal power where I was privileged by my whiteness.

It’s unclear at what age I developed the concept of “white” though it seems to have always been part of the language I have used to describe what I witnessed. In French, the term “Les Blancs” [the whites] refers to settlers (Lesueur, 2012). My child mind constructed the concept based on a criticism of what I associated with white peoples’ worldviews and actions. This in particular to English-speaking peoples who according to my French-Canadian world represented the dominant group who acted and believed themselves as superior. Later, I would attach male to that definition.

I suspect this was born of a sense of injustice to acts I witnessed against peoples with less (perceived) power or what I now relate to as privilege. This latter topic of privilege is a layered, dynamic and shifting concept that is related to one’s positionality and social location as well as to the power constructs in which one is situated. It is complex and contentious and much discussed. I am still learning how it manifests itself and the endless ways it infiltrates my life and impacts the lives of Indigenous peoples.

I needed to understand the challenge of replicating the oppressive research practices done in the name of academia using “Western” research epistemologies.

The following citation comes from *The Polynesian ‘Excellence’ Gene & Life Patent Bottom Trawling* (2007), a publication containing the work of sixteen Pacific

Indigenous authors who documented the experiences and responses of Pacific Indigenous communities to genetic research, products and patents on life forms.

Like many people in the Pacific of my generation, my early exposure to genetics and intellectual property assertions on life, occurred through awareness of, and activism against, the global mega-human population study The Human Genome Diversity Project (HGDP) and, through the US government patents on the DNA of indigenous individuals from the Hagahai tribe in Papua New Guinea and from the Solomon Islands in the early 1990's. When news of the Hagahai and Solomons patents surfaced, it seemed incomprehensible that a foreign government could patent DNA cells collected from Pacific indigenous people without the informed consent of the individuals, their communities or even their national governments. The Pacific patents were eventually challenged by the governments of Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands, but the US government rejected their concerns taking the view that the source of the DNA (and by implication the process in which they were collected) was of no consequence. (Aroha Te Pareake Mead, 2007, p. 34)

This praxis is a continuation of the historically manufactured Indigenous "Other" falsely constructed on racial, gender and cultural assumptions that are still instrumental in the exclusion of Indigenous peoples. From a research and design perspective, Indigenous peoples are still invisible and unequal participants in a social and commercial context, though Indigenous peoples' images, cultural work and knowledges are appropriated to only benefit a white, by extension, privileged audience.

The following serves to expose the extent of Indigenous knowledge appropriation. "According to documentation at the United Nations (UN) Development Programme: Indigenous knowledge fuels multi-billion dollar genetics supply industries, ranging from food and pharmaceuticals in developed countries to chemical product, energy and other manufactures" (Nakata, 2002, p. 282).

What is critical to understand is that Indigenous peoples are not included in these industries as full participants, stakeholders and creators. They are not receiving remuneration for their knowledges, nor engaged from a standpoint of free, prior and informed consent for the usage of their knowledges, their cultures or the use of their bodies. One of the goals of the United Nations (UN) Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People is to seek to address these violations.

I return to Absolon and Willett (2005) for their discussion on becoming an anti-oppressive researcher as they situate the role of privilege in anti-oppression work. Note that the authors speak to recognizing “settler moves to innocence” relative to privilege:

We need you to see yourself as potentially both oppressor and oppressed. We ask that you believe in your capacity for “agency”—that is, your capacity to act and alter the relations of oppression in your own world. Most of us can recognize oppression when it occurs or when we are being oppressed ourselves, but can we also *recognize the complicity that each of us has in creating and sustaining oppression over others* [emphasis added]? This is often harder, especially for all of us who are well-meaning people. For White, middle-class, able-bodied, heterosexual people, this is our most important work in anti-oppressive practice—recognizing our own privilege and working to dismantle the unjust systems that keep us in that privileged space. The key in recognizing oppression is seeing the oppression that occurs through the various activities, social relations, and social practices we engage in with others. One such activity is the research process, even when as a student researcher you feel like the least powerful person in the world (Absolon & Willett, 2005, p. 258).

My MRP acts as a chapter in my ongoing journey of revealing my complicity and biases as a member of a settler colonial nation. Still I am confronted by the pervasive disrespect and harm of the settler colonial world views and actions towards Indigenous peoples and the land. The journey’s focus is to shift from a place of unknowing to the need to act on what I learn, and become responsible towards Indigenous peoples.

Literature Review

Although I had drafted a description of which types of literature would best fit a traditional literature review at the project proposal stage, the academic standard dedicated to such does not appear in this paper. Rather the relevant and critical concepts were discovered as the research progressed and I developed a deepening understanding of the research questions and the topics they exposed. Hence references to the concepts and literature revealed in the research process are embedded throughout this paper. As this heuristic practice is now part of my daily experience there are no fixed boundaries except to continue the process of decolonization by realising how much more there is to learn, and more importantly to make opportunities to act, share and be accountable with others.

Along the journey, I immersed myself in the research process using the findings to guide my process/journey. Current events such as “Free the Falls” and “Standing Rock” via social media and traditional media sources allowed me to bear witness to Indigenous peoples’ experiences and views. I attended online and in person events related to social justice and activism including Indigenous rights, Indigenous art, video and music, and topics specific to Indigenous peoples on a local and global scale. To balance my sources, I read and observed non-Indigenous peoples, including newcomers to Canada, respond to current events that involved Indigenous peoples, government policies and legislature that affected Indigenous peoples in Canada and abroad, discussions re Indigenous authenticity and cultural appropriation, and involved in live and online events I attended.

To attempt to situate the research and findings within a theoretical framework, I read and studied the works of Indigenous scholars, researchers and educators as well as lawyers, artists and historians. This research was informed and interconnected with works by non-Indigenous scholars studying history, racism, feminism, intersectional analysis, accessibility and diversity studies, global border theory and social justice.

Researching the history of Canada from multiple Indigenous peoples' perspectives created a basis for my understanding of the current context and the intersection of truth and reconciliation. Individuals and collectives who have lived, and continue to live, situations of oppression develop an understanding of the factors that create and contribute to their current and intergenerational historical lived experiences. This extends to laws, treaties, doctrines and other legal instruments as well as socially constructed norms, values, and beliefs created to uphold power structures leading to oppression. These types of knowledges can empower in their specificity and I have witnessed peoples' resilience, conviction and wry humour born of these understandings.

Environmental Scan

I chose to use an environmental scan to study and analyze the current and historical factors and conditions that emerged in the research journey. This provided a method to map the diverse research done to date, document the types of research sources used, categorize the findings, and gather the results into themes to reveal my research process and associated findings.

The categorizing was conducted by grouping the findings into themes that recurrently emerged as the research had progressed. The themes were informed by the

questions of identifying the resistance to reconciliation with Indigenous peoples, seeking an understanding of how Indigenous research epistemologies could interacted with a research project space that was initiated by a settler colonial student, and inform what was required in responsible acts of truth and reconciliation.

The first iteration of categorization was based on commonality regardless of topic, thesis questions and drawn from any source material. Of the primary groupings the concept of land was a prevalent thread that informed all truth and reconciliation-based activities as well as necessary to understanding Indigenous knowledge epistemologies and governance systems. The second groupings provided perspectives or standpoints towards the categorized materials. This final iteration was to identify potential theoretical frameworks that could address the research process and findings.

A question that arose in the process was whether category themes could function as affordances. This could extend the concept introduced by psychologist James J. Gibson of affordance in a few ways; based on Indigenous epistemologies of relations to all and the settler colonialism conditioning influencing modes of interaction.

6. Discussions

The discussions section is the integration of my findings and reflections documenting a critical roadmap of what I discovered, and believe needs to be explored and reflected upon as part of a research and design journey to truth and reconciliation.

In the first section I describe my research process and findings relative to theoretical frameworks that are best suited to this project. These frameworks found do

support the complex subject matter and the process used. They offer opportunities for similar projects where the goal of exposing biases and barriers is required to counter oppression or situations where unequal power relations control the research process.

In the second section, I explore concepts of truth and reconciliation extending concepts proposed in the TRC report and I examine the intersection of settler colonial worldviews with multiple Indigenous concepts. The findings provide guidance to becoming responsible towards reconciliation.

In the third section, I expose an overview of the “shared story” of the Canadian nations and Indigenous nations. Acknowledging the truth is a pre-requisite to a reconciliation process and a necessary first step to building respectful relationships.

Section 1: Theoretical frameworks

In the following section I explore frameworks that provide suitable options to support both the research subject matter and the process I undertook in this project.

Anti-oppressive practices

The Anti-Oppressive Practice (AOP) provides a valuable framework for this project as its focus is on examining and changing the socio-political structure of society which in a social work context allows for the opportunity to provide appropriate solutions for healthier people and communities. It is rooted in social work practices yet has been introduced in other disciplines intersecting social justice and emancipatory concepts.

In the recent third edition of *Experience Research Social Change: Critical Methods* (Reid, Greaves, Kirby, 2017), the authors describe anti oppressive research as

a cluster of research approaches that center on reducing oppression where oppression “assumes structures and dominant philosophies and stances that contribute to silencing or ignoring less-powerful groups” (Reid, Greaves, Kirby, 2017, p. 37). They explain how social workers and social scientists use a dual approach of including anti-oppression elements in their service delivery and using anti-oppressive thinking in their research practices. The authors further cite that “a central element of anti-oppressive research is to name and then disrupt oppressive thinking by deliberately asking questions that illuminate these processes” (Reid, Greaves, Kirby, 2017, p. 37). This supports the process I used to attempt to expose the barriers and biases to reconciliation.

Anti-oppressive research

I first encountered anti oppressive research in the collection of critical essays in *Research as Resistance; critical, indigenous, & anti-oppressive approaches* (Brown and Strega, 2005) published by Canadian Scholars Press. Up until that point I had read works by Indigenous scholars about Indigenous epistemologies, research methodologies and methods, and ethical frameworks specific to working with Indigenous peoples. My goal was to form a basic understanding of Indigenous research principles that centered on Indigenous voices. This book provided ways to begin to address the research gap I had encountered of being a settler exploring Indigenous research methodologies and knowledge production models.

Karen Potts and Leslie Brown propose three emerging tenets of anti-oppressive research which they describe as interrelated, informing each other and used as assessment tools in their anti-oppressive practices (Becoming an Anti-Oppressive

Researcher, 2005, p. 259). I will situate my project in each of these three tenets by closely examining this article's text and concepts.

"Anti-oppressive Research is Social Justice and Resistance in Process and in Outcome"

This first tenet describes how although research can be a tool for positive social changes it also has the power to maintain the status quo and perpetuate the dominant groups' views and power relations. The authors' position is that this kind of work requires a personal commitment and work towards making changes for individuals, communities and institutions. The pivotal statement for me is that as anti-oppressive researchers we personally are the first thing that needs to change. Furthermore, the research work needs to "challenge the status quo in its processes" and "seeks to resist oppression embedded in ourselves, our work and our world" (Potts & Brown, 2005, p.260).

For me this means questioning how I approach the truth and reconciliation topic from a personal and systemic perspective acknowledging my location, and how this fits into conducting this initial research as a graduate student in an institution informed by Eurocentric values. This forces me to continually reflect upon my research process and understanding of the larger reconciliation project as well as challenge my own biases as they continue to be exposed. I needed to start by situating self in this research project.

“Anti-oppressive Research Recognizes that All Knowledge Is Socially Constructed and Political”

This tenet examines notions of knowledge and the powers granted by its acquisition and ownership. This is well-documented in the Western/Eurocentric world where historically knowledge was propagated by constructs of racial superiority and the associated higher intelligence which is still very much in evidence today. The authors note this is heightened in the knowledge economy and state that “anti-oppressive research puts the ownership of knowledge back into the hands of those who experience it, who need it” (Potts & Brown, 2005, p. 261). Furthermore, as knowledge and power are related and knowledge creation is influenced by power relations, Potts & Brown note that “anti-oppressive researchers recognize that knowledge is political; it is not benign” (Potts & Brown, 2005, p. 261).

In the context of my project, this functioned in a few ways.

The dominant narratives in the Canadian nation stories have and are still being controlled and shaped by the privileged people in power. This is particularly relevant for Indigenous peoples, the First Peoples, who were here long before the colonial settlers set foot on the lands where they lived. Indigenous voices, cultures and stories continue to be deliberately excluded and erased. My research set out to hear Indigenous peoples re-story our shared history from the erasures and witness the ongoing restoration of their languages, cultures and traditions and reclamation of land in the role of land stewardship. It also functioned reflexively where I needed to question my contributions to oppression and how my concepts of knowledge and positions of power influenced my interactions and relationships.

“The Anti-oppressive Research Process Is All about Power and Relationships”

The third tenet proposed by Potts and Brown speaks directly to the power relationships between the researcher and the researched. Participatory action research and participatory design attempt to mitigate the power imbalances that occur within the research or design context. However these approaches may be unsuccessful in addressing the complex issues of power between the people involved in the research. Additionally, in the context of this project the Eurocentric framework itself needs to be questioned and its suitability to inclusive research and design projects.

The authors put forward a model to discern the power relations and describe how it can function to “shift power from those removed from what is trying to be “known” to those closest to it—that is, those people with epistemic privilege or lived experience of the issue under study” (Potts & Brown, 2005, p. 263). The power hierarchy is as follows:

- the knower and known
- groups of knowers
- knowers and any outside researchers
- researchers and external institutions and ideological paradigms

Another point presented by the authors is how they view the nature of the relationship between a researcher and a researched. For them the relationships they developed aren't perceived as a one-time series of interactions for a project or service delivery but rather as an ongoing relationship that could extend for years (Potts & Brown, 2005, p. 263).

This third tenet helped me name some of the uncomfortable space I had identified in the introduction to this paper. I intuitively sensed a power imbalance that played out in a sphere much larger than self yet knew I was part of somehow. It also describes complexities encountered in my research where issues of power influenced the positions of both Indigenous and non-Indigenous researchers and scholars.

It also provides a way to seek alignment with Indigenous ethical concepts such as the 4R's - Respect, Relevance, Reciprocity, and Responsibility (Kirkness & Barnhardt, 2001) - as well as the Ownership, Control, Access, Possession (OCAP) principles used in health research with First Nations communities.

Reflections on theoretical frameworks

My personal belief is that “knowledge” is based on experience – physical, mental, spiritual and emotional within a larger framework of cultural, social and land environments as place. As much as I am an abstract and conceptual person I believe the grounding of information and practice into lived experience is the relational knot that gives value and meaning to knowledge. Conversely, knowledge can be abstracted yet stay grounded to its base on and in experience.

The best description of my process was the concept of a research journey. It supported a way to frame how the findings and insights become new questions to clarify the groundwork I was exposing trying to understand the barriers to reconciliation.

Section 2: Truth and Reconciliation

Concepts of reconciliation

The theme of reconciliation is appearing with consistent frequency since the release of the Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) of Canada in 2015 and the embedded Calls to Action. However there are differences in what defines reconciliation and who is making that definition using what language.

I begin with the text from the Summary of the Final Report of the TRC:

To some people, *reconciliation* is the re-establishment of a conciliatory state. However, this is a state that many Aboriginal people assert never has existed between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people. To others, reconciliation, in the context of Indian residential schools, is similar to dealing with a situation of family violence. It's about coming to terms with events of the past in a manner that overcomes conflict and establishes a respectful and healthy relationship among people, going forward. It is in the latter context that the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada has approached the question of reconciliation. (TRC Final Report, p. 6)

To situate the concept of reconciliation in Indigenous languages, the Elders and Knowledge Keepers told the TRC committee there is was “no specific word for “reconciliation” in their own languages” yet ceremonies and protocols of Indigenous law provide many practices “to establish relationships, repair conflicts, restore harmony, and make peace” (TRC, p.17).

However many Indigenous peoples' voices in media and within academia question reconciliation's framing and meanings. As I don't speak or understand any Indigenous language I know am missing context and situating understandings of its meaning. The use, and consideration, of reconciliation within settler educational,

political and economic contexts greatly influences its meaning as does the positioning by governments and corporations, and mainstream media. There is even what is now called a reconciliation industry.

To locate the conciliatory state notion from the TRC text we take a look at the history of the Canadian nation revealed through how settler colonialism “functions through the replacement of indigenous populations with an invasive settler society that, over time, develops a distinctive identity and sovereignty” (Barker & Battel Lowman, n.d.). What is important is the focus on an identity and sovereignty without Indigenous peoples which raises the question of how, or whether, reconciliation is possible without addressing the ongoing intent of settlement and political control of Indigenous lands.

In their article *Indigenous Storytelling, Truth-telling, and Community Approaches to Reconciliation* (Corntassel, J., Chaw-win-is & T'lakwadzi, 2009), the three Indigenous authors indicate there are gaps in the reconciliation concept. By isolating the events documented in the TRC report as the past separate from their ongoing impact in the lives of Indigenous peoples today, it sets up a situation of alleviating settler guilt for harms by “forgiving and forgetting” and “moving on from the past” (Corntassel, Chaw-win-is, T'lakwadzi, 2009, p. 144). The paper positions that when acts of restitution and justice are not addressed as part of a reconciliation process that it serves to perpetuate the dominant culture’s status quo particularly related to concepts of land title. As the corporate interests require the support of the federal and provincial governments for access to land, there is the need to “establish the “certainty” of a land claim in such a way as to facilitate the extinguishment of original Indigenous title to the land” (Corntassel, J., Chaw-win-is & T'lakwadzi, 2009, p. 145).

For example the “British Columbia New Relationship Accord” negotiations with Indigenous peoples use the language of reconciliation yet on reading the text on the B.C. government’s website I notice the term Crown Land which I suspect is a settler construct. Bob Joseph, a Gwawaenuk Nation member in B.C., who founded the Indigenous Corporate Training Incorporated, has a webpage blog entry dedicated to the topic of not using the term crown land in First Nation consultations. Joseph explains the concept of crown land versus Aboriginal title lands. “In large sections of British Columbia crown land is unceded land meaning that Aboriginal Title has neither been surrendered nor acquired by the crown” (Joseph, 2014). Hence, this is an example of settler language dictating meaning and informing the power relationship by claiming the land as their own.

Corntassel, Chaw-win-is and T’lakwadzi add another dimension to the definition of reconciliation “at its core, reconciliation is a Western concept with religious connotations of restoring one’s relationship to God” (Corntassel, J., Chaw-win-is & T’lakwadzi, 2009, p. 145). This is a contentious concept as it implicates the Christian concepts of the Doctrines of Discovery and terra nullius which were used to legitimize seizure of lands inhabited by Indigenous peoples. This also expose the impact of the residential schools use of Christian religion to strip Indigenous identify by forcing the children to adopt a Christina name and forbidding them to practice their own religious beliefs. Instead the authors propose that “our overarching goal as Indigenous peoples should not be to restore an asymmetrical relationship with the state but to restory our communities toward justice” (Corntassel, J., Chaw-win-is & T’lakwadzi, 2009, p. 145).

In May 2016, Terri Hanse interviewed Tamara Starblanket (Spider Woman) from Ahtahkakoop First Nation in Treaty Six Territory who had recently been appointed as Co-Chair of the North American Indigenous Peoples Caucus (NAIPC). When Starblanket was asked how encouraged she was about Canada's new Liberal government promise to rebuild the relationships with Indigenous peoples by including them in decisions that affects them and their land her answer is informative. She points out that the legal framework on which the proposed reconciliation is based and the implementation of UNDRIP are of problematic. Starblanket is concerned future generations are not being considered with these decisions. She goes on to say that "reconciliation is the new word for assimilation and an extension of the myth that Canada has underlying title in our territories" (Starblanket, 2016).

Once again the question is posed of "how to reconcile a genocidal past and present that is not acknowledged as the root cause of the problem?" (Starblanket, 2016) Starblanket echoes what other Indigenous peoples have proposed as a way forward - self-determination "we know what is best for us and our future generations" (Starblanket, 2016) and addressing the broken Treaties, which are legally binding documents that Canada has not respected, and the possibility of creating new ones much like the Peace and Friendship Treaties first negotiated when the Europeans first arrived to North America.

Recently in an article published on CBC News website by Clayton Thomas-Müller, a member of the Treaty #6 based Mathias Colomb Cree Nation (Pukatawagan), the author called out the corporate sponsorship Indigenous initiatives.

Redwashing is an attempt by a corporation to paint itself as "benevolent" — a good neighbour — through sponsorship schemes for Indigenous education, art and culture. It is the process of covering up the detrimental effects of corporate initiatives with friendly slogans and lump sum donations to Indigenous communities (Clayton Thomas-Müller, 2017).

The multi-faceted corporations who are large employers of Indigenous peoples and sponsor Indigenous youth education have destructive ecological footprints and histories of untreated toxic environments that impact the health of the lands, the plants and animals, the waters and the Indigenous peoples living on or near them. Thomas-Müller further calls on Indigenous leadership to speak out against the violations as he sees the "redwashing" influencing their actions as well. There is other documented evidence of such conflicts of interest related to the resources and extraction industries and Indigenous leadership. The imposition of settler colonial structures of power has the ability to influence all peoples that come in contact and seem to benefit from it.

One of the misconceptions I held was my lack of awareness regarding Indigenous science systems of knowledges. This reflects my biased and false construct of Indigenous peoples as being stuck in the past. I did recognize that Indigenous peoples have an extensive knowledge and long range views of the environments based on shared generational experiences. What I initially failed to see was the value this could contribute to "modern" or "Western" science. I suspect I am not alone in that vision. This leads to a dismissal and bias against Indigenous systems of knowledges' ability to contribute to an evidence-based understanding of environmental, animal, plant and water resources historical patterns, and elaborate sustainable solutions to mitigate the impacts of climate change. However this is slowly changing as collaborative work is being produced and published by academia and non-academic peer reviewed journals.

In a March 12, 2016 article by Joanna Smith, Ottawa Bureau political reporter for The Toronto Star, the reporter documents examples in Canada of collaborations with scientific and Indigenous communities and elders which include traditional Indigenous knowledge, oral traditions to address issues on climate change (Smith, 2016).

Let's examine for a moment a definition of Indigenous science (IS) by the Worldwide Indigenous Science Network (WISN), based in Hawaii, founded in 1989 from meetings between Indigenous women, elders and Western scientists. "Like Western science (WS), Indigenous science (IS) relies upon direct observation for forecasting and generating predictions; its power lies in its ability to make connections and perceive patterns across vast cycles of space and time" (WISN, 2017). Epistemologically these two descriptions of science align without conflict yet here is where the paradigms shift "one marked difference between the two sciences: *Data from IS is not used to control the forces of nature, but instead is used to find methods and resources for accommodating it* [emphasis added]." (WISN, 2017)

This is related to Indigenous concepts of relations to all and the notion of land stewardship – the latter a responsibility the nation of Canada and its peoples had agreed to share when they negotiated the first Peace and Friendship Treaties with Indigenous peoples upon arrival to Turtle Island. There were no land cessions in these agreements – they weren't necessary based on Indigenous concepts of land which do not include private ownership.

There are the Indigenous concepts of walking or living in two worlds where traditional Indigenous knowledges and worldviews intersect with Western frameworks of

and methodologies. There are examples of Indigenous peoples using Western research frameworks and methods to inform the development and revitalizing Indigenous modes to knowledge making for their own cultures, health and well-being and knowledge systems such as the Twenty Five Indigenous Projects described in Linda Tuhiwai Smith's text *Decolonizing Methodologies* (2nd edition, 2012).

However Aboriginal land title remains a contentious issue and the persistent settler colonial goal of "assertion of state sovereignty and juridical control over their lands" (Barker & Battel Lowman, n.d.) insists on remaining firmly in place.

In a Tweet (2016, March 16) Ryan McMahon @RMComedy an Anishinaabe comedian, writer, media maker & community activator based out of Treaty #1 territory (Winnipeg) writes: "The Reconciliation Industry that is building in Canada looks more like a basic lifeskills program - Be nice to each other. Don't be racist" (McMahon, 2016)

Jim Brown of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) radio *180 show* interviewed Ryan McMahon on Sunday March 27, 2016 about his ongoing work on reconciliation which includes workshops, podcasts, interviews, etc. McMahon elaborates on his March 16 Tweet by noting the differences in the discussions about reconciliation within indigenous communities versus the ones heard in mainstream institutions. "I guess I'm shocked and a little frustrated with the level of [the mainstream] conversation being sort of like...a basic lifeskills program," says McMahon where the focus isn't "asking hard questions about land, sovereignty, and treaty implementation" (McMahon, 2016).

Here we witness the subtlety of a “move to innocence” (Tuck & Yang, 2012, Snelgrove, Dhamoon & Cornassel, 2014) where the presumed settler colonial concept of land ownership is uncontested shifting the focus away the issues of land theft.

The CBC webpage hosting the interview provides this text from McMahon "I would argue that before reconciliation, we really need to look at decolonization," he says. "Decolonization starts with land. It starts with the question of land. Do indigenous people have the ability to live freely on and with relationship to the land, as we did prior to confederation? And the answer right now is no" (as quoted by Brown, 2016).

As a settler, I must ask how this impacts Indigenous peoples who are once again denied the recognition of their experiences and the relationship to their lands by the creating new myths clothed in the settler language of reconciliation. As a Canadian, what actions do I need to take to understand the concepts reconciliation to hear the myriad discussions and deconstruct what is harmful to cease replicating the settler status quo? As a designer, what is my role and stance in acts of reconciliation? And the hard questions of how do I participate in moves to innocence by washing my hands of my complicity on the ongoing project of oppression and preserving my privilege?

I return to the interview with Starblanket “I learned that at the root of genocide are theories of racial superiority. This is evidenced by the Doctrine of Discovery, and the dehumanizing terms that were applied against our nations and peoples” (Starblanket, 2016). The interviewee spares no words in her definition of the problem:

This is the colonial society and people that created these laws and policies have never addressed why they do such destructive things against other peoples and nations. The colonizer needs to look inward and examine

its own conduct as to why these are catastrophic problems. (Starblanket, 2016)

I say I, as a person, and I as part of we, the dominant culture, have very uncomfortable questions to ask ourselves and uncomfortable work still to do.

Reconciliation as relationship

I return to the TRC report to explore other dimensions of reconciliation. Their mandate describes reconciliation as:

An ongoing individual and collective process, and will require commitment from all those affected including First Nations, Inuit and Métis former Indian Residential School (IRS) students, their families, communities, religious entities, former school employees, government and the people of Canada. *Reconciliation may occur between any of the above groups* [emphasis added]. (TRC, p.16)

I emphasize, and wish to extend, this citation to encourage a larger view of ongoing relations involving all as we live on and with this land together in spite of the separation deliberately created by the settler colonial structure and its biased systems. There have always been relations amongst and between First Nations and Inuit nations, between subsequent settler nations and the First Peoples including the Métis nations, and most importantly with the lands. The First Peoples had lived in relation with land, and its nations, and continually renewed their relationships. The challenge is about respectfully acknowledging these relationships today and our responsibility to them.

Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, a Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg scholar, shares some perspectives on reconciliation and relationships. In her book, *Dancing on Our Turtle's Back: Stories of Nishnaabeg Re-Creation, Resurgence, and a New Emergence*

(2011), Simpson explains how reconciliation is not a new idea as historically attempts had been made to reconcile differences with treaty negotiations however these “have not produced the kinds of relationships Indigenous peoples intended” (Simpson, 2011, p. 21). The author asks how reconciliation is possible when most Canadians don’t acknowledge or understand the historical and ongoing injustices and the state’s “unwillingness to make adjustments to the unjust relationship” (Simpson, 2011, p.21).

Simpson clarifies that treaties extend to people and that it is our responsibility to act as per our negotiated agreements in the Treaty relationships, and asking if it possible for Canadians to engage in a process of reconciliation if this isn’t understood. “We are all treaty people.” (TRC, Saul, Williamson, Office of the Treaty Commissioner (OTC) of Saskatchewan). The scholar uses the analogy of an abusive relationship where the abused wants out of the relationship but since the abuser wants to reconcile they are the focus of attention even if they don’t take responsibility nor change their ongoing abusive behaviour. The abuser just wants to say sorry so they feel less guilty about the behaviour (Simpson, 2011, p.21).

There are concerns that if reconciliation isn’t interpreted broadly it will continue favouring the state notes Simpson. By centring solely on residential schools it displaces the larger relationships which are responsible for the historical and ongoing assimilation and forms of genocide while dismissing the “legitimacy of Indigenous resistance”. This encourages a Canadian notion of post-reconciliation without addressing our role in the treaty relationships. Furthermore it positions the Indigenous Elders who were primarily impacted by the residential school system as victims instead of “our strongest

visionaries and (the ones who) inspire us to vision alternative futures”. (Simpson, 2011, p. 22)

The notion of relationships and power imbalances is also discussed by Taiaiake Alfred and Jeff Corntassel:

[T]here is a danger in allowing colonization to be the only story of Indigenous lives. It must be recognized that colonialism is a narrative in which the Settler’s power is the fundamental reference and assumption, inherently limiting Indigenous freedom and imposing a view of the world that is but an outcome or perspective on that power (Corntassel, 2009, p. 139).

The authors insist “a restorying process” is required to examine how settler colonial histories influence Indigenous peoples’ view of themselves and how it shapes their own stories.

Similarly, Paulette Regan, a non-Indigenous senior researcher with the TRC commission insists that settler Canadians need to engage in a re-storying process to examine how their own colonial histories influences how settler see themselves and how it has, and continues, to shape their stories [histories]. A fundamental shift is required to change the ongoing Canadian story based on non-truths.

Settler violence against Indigenous peoples is woven into the fabric of Canadian history in an unbroken thread from past to present that we must now unravel, unsettling our comfortable assumptions about the past. At the same time, we must work as Indigenous allies to “restory” the dominant culture version of history; that is, we must make decolonizing space for Indigenous history—counter-narratives of diplomacy, law, and peacemaking practices—as told by Indigenous peoples themselves (as quoted in Corntassel, 2009, p. 138).

These acts of re-storying could align with the Nishnaabeg concept of “Aanji Maajitaawin” which Leanne Simpson translates as; “to start again, the art of starting

over, to reflective regenerate”. For Simpson “reconciliation must be grounded in cultural regeneration and political resurgence” (Simpson, 2011, p. 22) and is a process which will take time as it involves regenerating Nishnaabeg languages, political processes, philosophies, and values. Concurrently the nation of Canada and Canadians need to actively participate in decolonization and re-education processes to locate themselves as a necessary condition to create and live respectful relationships.

Simpson explores how regeneration is about rebalancing relationships and how concepts of restoration are inherent in the Nishnaabeg legal systems which support rebalancing relationships. In Indigenous law, restorative justice is a practice where the abuser takes responsibility for their actions by being present in a circle in the presence of the person they violated, and the peoples that both the perpetrator and the survivor have responsibilities towards. Everyone in the circle can speak and share their thoughts, feelings and perspectives on the actions required to address what harm has been done and restore balance in the relationships. The survivor has the choice to share. The abuser experiences the full impact of their actions and the power relationship is shifted from a western model to focus on the perpetrator and their responsibilities to the survivor and the community impacted by the harm done. “Reconciliation then becomes a process embodied by both the survivor and the perpetrator” (Simpson, 2011, p. 23). This model works in Nishnaabeg, and other Indigenous communities, to support rehabilitation and restoration of all towards rebalancing relationships.

The points raised by these authors reflect the TRC’s recommendation that describes how “establishing respectful relationships also requires the revitalization of

Indigenous law and legal traditions” (TRC, 2015, p. 16). These types of traditions provide holistic ways of approaching relationship building and in particular relationship restoration, or what has been proposed as re-storying and regeneration. Much work has been done internationally with restorative justice within justice systems, peacebuilding and schools as well as truth and reconciliation commissions with positive results. (Centre for Justice and Reconciliation; Zerh; Edutopia).

The current dominant society using Western models of justice focus on control and punishment of the individual while Indigenous justice systems’ purpose is the “resolution of conflict, the reconciliation and the maintenance of community harmony and good order” (Government of Manitoba, 1999). To expand our views and provide alternative ways to work towards reconciliation, the TRC recommends 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”. (TRC, 2015, p. 16)

In a commitment to reconciliation by the Canadian nation and its peoples, learning about and adopting new ways to relationship making is a sensible approach particularly in light of Canada’s acts of cultural genocide. As noted in the TRC report “No Canadian can take pride in this country’s treatment of Aboriginal peoples, and, for that reason, all Canadians have a critical role to play in advancing reconciliation in ways that honour and revitalize the nation-to-nation Treaty relationship”.(TRC, 2015, p.183).

By shifting the focus back to the concept of treaty relationships where all are held accountable for their part in the ongoing balance of our relations, there begins to be

opportunities for acts of reconciliation, recognition of truth and responsibility for acknowledging the harms done. This, I believe, is a necessary first step.

The TRC Final Report Summary asks readers to remember:

Aboriginal peoples have always remembered the original relationship they had with early Canadians. That relationship of mutual support, respect, and assistance was confirmed by the Royal Proclamation of 1763 and the Treaties with the Crown that were negotiated in good faith by their leaders. That memory, confirmed by historical analysis and passed down through Indigenous oral histories, has sustained Aboriginal peoples in their long political struggle to live with dignity as self-determining peoples with their own cultures, laws, and connections to the land. (TRC, 2015, p. 184)

To situate themselves in the Treaty relationships settlers can look to the shared history of these relationships that were first negotiated using diplomatic instruments of Peace and Friendship Treaties and Two Row Wampum treaty relationships.

The first Peace and Friendship Treaties were negotiated between the Mi'kmaq, Maliseet and Passamaquoddy First Nations and the British Crown in what is now Eastern Canada (INAC, 2015). According to the INAC website, the difference between these first treaties and ones later negotiated in the formation of Canada is the lack of surrender of rights to the lands and resources traditionally used and occupied. My research reveals that this view is not mutually held by all parties involved in the treaty negotiations neither historically nor contemporarily. This reflects the dominant settler group insisting their claim to land rights in spite of the historical evidence to the contrary.

The Mi'gmawei Mawiomi Secretariat (MMS), a governing body of the Mi'gmaq Nation, has a website page dedicated to explaining Treaty Relationships. The MSS describes an existing tradition of treaty-making with other Indigenous nations prior to

settler contact which continues today as a “way to recognize, affirm and strengthen our alliances with others” (MMS, n.d.). An overview of the Mi’gmaq Treaties was given by the Elders who conserved and passed on their treaty stories as supported in the oral traditions which ensured legal practices were passed to the subsequent generations for diplomatic relationship building. The Sante Mawiomi ("Grand Council") was the governing body whose members spoke about the “importance of understanding and respecting treaties as spiritual as well political agreements that bind the signers to mutual obligations and responsibilities” (MMS, n.d.).

The treaties were maintained among the various Mi’gmaq extended kinship systems to achieve peace and friendship in a mawiomi ("council gathering") where laws and regulations for managing the land and its resources were negotiated. “The treaty agreements reached clarified what the parties together agreed were the binding outcomes of the collective process” (MMS, n.d.). The Mi’gmaq entered into treaty relationships with the British Crown to extend their existing kinship systems which the Elders referred to as "adding to our relations". Note that the “well-being of the entire group was always of greater value than individual wealth” (MSS, n.d.) a concept which occurs in many Indigenous nations and is typically not shared by neoliberal societal values which focus on the individual at the potential expense of the community.

The Two Row Wampum Belt was a means of recording treaty agreements between members of the Five Nations of the Iroquois (Haudenosaunee) and non-Haudenosaunee nations. They embodied the principals of Peace, Friendship and Mutual Respect. “The Kaswentha or Two Row Wampum is a treaty of respect for the dignity and integrity of the other nation, and stresses the importance of non-interference

of one nation in the business of the other” (Mohawk Council of Akwesasne, n.d.). These principles formed the basis of all Haudenosaunee treaties with other nations including the Dutch, the French, the British and the Americans” (Mohawk Council of Akwesasne, n.d.).

The Haudenosaunee and Dutch treaty of the early 1600’s was based on three principles with the final being “this agreement will last forever” (Onondaga Nation, n.d.). The Dutch recorded the agreement on paper with three silver chains. The idea was that silver doesn’t rust or break (as would iron) and symbolized that the agreement would be polished and renewed when the “brothers” meet. Of importance is the mutually agreed upon concept of brothers as it denotes that both nations were equals in the relationship. This is known as the Silver Covenant Chain of Friendship (Onondaga Nation, n.d.).

As was their custom, the Haudenosaunee made a Wampum Belt to record the agreement. The general consensus is that each of the two parallel purple rows represented each nation’s boat. “One boat is the canoe with the Haudenosaunee way of life, laws, and people. The other is the Dutch ship with their laws, religion, and people in it. The boats will travel side by side down the river of life. Each nation will respect the ways of each other and will not interfere with the other.” (Onondaga Nation, n.d.)

Jana-Rae Yerxa, Anishinaabe from Couchiching First Nation within the Treaty #3 Territory, describes treaty making and its link to relationships in her article *Gii-kaapizigemin manoomin Neyaashing: A resurgence of Anishinaabeg nationhood* (2014). “Anishinaabeg have long understood treaty making to be about creating and defining relationships that bind nations and beings to one another. Treaties bind people through

shared connections that promote living in harmony with all life forms. Treaty allows us to define how we, as Anishinaabeg, are to peacefully co-exist amongst each other based on an ethic of mutual respect, by establishing our roles and responsibilities that we agree to uphold with one another". (Yerxa, 2014, p.4)

This situates mutual agreement as a core concept to relationships based on ethical values of respect and responsibility. Of note, treaties extended to all life forms and in her book, *Dancing on the Turtle's Back*, Simpson tells the story of the Anishinaabe temporary loss of two of their relatives, the nations of salmon and eels, and explains how healing those relationships informed governance models (Simpson, 2011, p. 87). A third value in treaty making is renewal. This ensures all parties in the relationship maintain the agreed upon principles of respect and responsibility by regularly renegotiating and renewing the mutual agreements (Stark, 2010).

The scholar, Heidi Kiiwetinesipiik Stark, of the Turtle Mountain Ojibwe describes in her paper *Respect, Responsibility, and Renewal: The Foundations of Anishinaabe Treaty Making with the United States and Canada* (2010) how the early treaties between indigenous peoples and the Animal and Star nations contained principles of treaty making which "inform Anishinaabe political thought and practice as the Anishinaabe negotiated treaties with the United States and Canada and remain pivotal to contemporary legal and political struggles that face Native nations" (Stark, 2010, p. 147). The author explains how the story of *The Woman Who Married a Beaver* acts as a treaty as it contains "the values and proper behavior necessary for two or more nations to engage in creating alliances with one another, a relationship rooted in respect, responsibility, and renewal" (Stark, 2010, p. 147). Note that these principles in

their treaty practices function “as a means to establish *just and mutually beneficial relationships* [emphasis added]” (Stark, 2010, p. 147).

Jana-Rae Yerxa (2014) describes that in Anishinaabeg pedagogy “land is a source of knowledge about how to conduct good relationships” (Yerxa, 2014, p. 160). She shares her experiences with land-based practices and how community gatherings to prepare a sacred food, manoomin (wild rice), informs relationships. The Anishinaabeg have a significant treaty relationship with manoomin which they revisit and renew each harvesting season. It embodies a relationship based on “respect, care, reciprocity, and interdependence” (Yerxa, 2014, p. 163):

Our land based practices carry the very essence of who we are as Anishinaabeg. They are alive within the land as well as in our elders and community members that hold strong relationships with the land. My grandparents speak to me about the importance of being on the land so that my relationship can flourish and so I am able to learn more about who I am as an Anishinaabe person. They tell me the land is my university, my book. (Yerxa, 2014, p. 161)

I recognize that as a member of a settler nation that nor I nor my nation have respected or been responsible in our relationships with Indigenous peoples or the nations embodied by land. I, and our nations, need to understand and apply the principles of treaty relationships within a larger context, so that there are opportunities to seek ways to live as equals and act based on respect, responsibility, and renewal. This provides a reciprocal way to live and interact with all of our relations with other peoples and nations including the natural and spiritual worlds.

Land as reconciliation

Naming the land is an important exercise - it enables people to navigate and travel based on common understandings; and it is a reflection of the culture, knowledge and history of the people who live on the land. But naming the land is also an exercise in control. (Di Gangi, 2010)

My initial assessment that land was, is, a critical and central issue to the reconciliation process has been clearly confirmed. I've read and heard myriad voices, at times contradictory and contentious, along this research journey and consistently land appears at the heart of the discussions and the source of deep-rooted conflict.

Stolen land.

Christi Belcourt, a renowned artist and Michif (Métis) activist spoke about reconciliation, and land, in an interview with Anishinaabe writer Ryan McMahon:

I don't even know if reconciliation is possible because we are living in this country that is all stolen land. We don't have the land – the health and wellbeing of our people and nations is dependent on our connection to land. ... Everyone is talking about reconciliation all over the place but no one is saying returning the land. Instead, the results of residential schools, multigenerational effects, extreme poverty are all due to our dispossession of the land.

The solution is pretty obvious – it must include land. [It is like] a guy comes over and takes my truck and I see him all over town driving around in my stolen pickup truck. He sees me walking around in my beat up moccasins with holes in them, and he jumps out of his truck and says, "Hey, it's so nice to see you again, I really miss our friendship." And then he shakes my hand and says, "I'll see you around and maybe we can get together for a coffee" and jumps back in my truck and takes off again. It's really hard for me to see that guy as a friend...

If Canadians are truly interested in reconciling, then they will come and say and 'how can that be achieved,' rather than talking about everything but land." (Land, 2016)

There are current and historical issues about land seizures from Indigenous peoples based on racial and religious superiority concepts and principles supported by Christian doctrines such as Doctrine of Discovery and terra nullius. Although contention and disagreement exists about the details of how these principles were used as justification for land seizure that does not remove their implication in the acts. The ongoing impact of these concepts is specifically mentioned in the TRC's Calls to Action (Calls to Action, p. 5) and the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and its repudiation (UN, 2012). In 2016, The Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops (CCCB) issued a statement responding to the TRC's Call to Action item 48 which speak directly to these issues. The published statement endorses their support of the UN Declaration and "repudiates illegitimate concepts and principles used by Europeans to justify the seizure of land previously held by Indigenous Peoples and often identified by the terms Doctrine of Discovery and terra nullius" (CCCB, 2016).

Gerald Taiaiake Alfred is a Kanien'kehaka (Mohawk) philosopher, writer, and teacher. He has written and lectured extensively on land and governance issues and served as an advisor to his own and other First Nations' governments since 1987. In Taiaiake 2009 paper, *Restitution is the Real Pathway to Justice for Indigenous Peoples*, written as part of the Aboriginal Healing Foundation Research Series Taiaiake squarely addresses the intersection of reconciliation and return of lands. This topic isn't new. It has persistently been raised by Indigenous voices since the settlers first failed to maintain their Treaty responsibilities as stewards of the land.

Something was stolen, lies were told, and they have never been made right. That is the crux of the problem. If we do not shift away from the pacifying discourse of reconciliation and begin to reframe people's

perceptions of the problem so that it is not a question of how to reconcile with colonialism that faces us but instead how to use restitution as the first step towards creating justice and a moral society, we will be advancing colonialism, not decolonization. (Taiaiake, 2009, p. 166)

The author insists that the crux of the problem must be addressed. As in Indigenous law and based on the principles of restorative justice, the theft and harmful acts (crimes) must be owned by the perpetrators and acts of restitution determined by all affected. The critical dimension that I long misunderstood (or was unwilling to admit to) that Taiaiake highlights is that “all non-Indigenous Canadians, old families and recent immigrants alike, have gained their existence as people on this land and citizens of this country” (Taiaiake, 2009, p. 182). The fact that I am privileged by this land theft and crimes is unsettling, uncomfortably so.

To date this has not been addressed in spite of the promises made by the Canadian federal government to act upon the TRC’s Calls to Action and Canada officially adopting the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in 2016.

Taiaiake offers a way forward that speaks to what I perceive as settler fears of loss of property yet directly confronts the larger issues of land and resource use.

When I say to a settler, “Give it back,” am I talking about them giving up the country and moving away? No. Irredentism has never been in the vision of our peoples. When I say, “Give it back,” I am talking about settlers demonstrating respect for what we share—the land and its resources—and making things right by offering us the dignity and freedom we are due and returning enough of our power and land for us to be self-sufficient (Taiaiake, 2009, p. 166).

My understanding, and perception, of the meaning of land keeps evolving as I continue to listen and reflect upon what I am learning. There are fundamentally

divergent worldviews about land between settler colonial and Indigenous peoples, and within all groups of said peoples. Concepts of land are deeply embedded in personal, community and nation-based perspectives and are reflected in cultural, legal, diplomatic, social, spiritual and economic practices. This is not exclusive to the multiple peoples mentioned yet there are inherent differences about relationships to land between Indigenous peoples and non-Indigenous peoples across the earth.

During the TRC, Elder Reg Crowshoe shared about the role of stories in reconciliation “we have stories in our culture about our superheroes, how we treat each other, stories about how animals and plants give us authorities and privileges to use plants as healing, but we also have stories about practices” (TRC, 2015, p. 47). The Elder mentions that stories function as theories. He highlights the importance of practices asking how we want to practice reconciliation. Elder Crowshoe goes on to explain what I believe is critical to the discussion and the breakdown point in the settler worldview.

Reconciliation between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Canadians, from an Aboriginal perspective, also requires reconciliation with the natural world. If human beings resolve problems between themselves but continue to destroy the natural world, then reconciliation remains incomplete. This is a perspective that we as Commissioners have repeatedly heard: that reconciliation will never occur unless we are also reconciled with the earth.

Mi'kmaq and other Indigenous laws stress that humans must journey through life in conversation and negotiation with all creation. Reciprocity and mutual respect help sustain our survival. (TRC, 2015, p. 18)

The settler colonial fixation on land ownership and resources acquisition are core drivers to the ongoing development and histories of Canada and have occurred at the

expense of Indigenous peoples and their relationships to land, and the land itself. The prevalence of land ownership as the dominant practice silenced the Indigenous stories and concepts of land, such as shared land stewardship, and were consistently suppressed based on the positioning of settler superiority. This imposition of unequal power relations set up nation control of land as part of the colonial mandate and in turn controlling the Indigenous relationships to land.

Jana-Rae Yerxa (2014) points out that there are not only disputes over access to physical land but how the psychological impact of the colonial experiences reinforces a disconnection to land-based ways of life. “A sure indication of colonial mentalities is our emphasis on seeking recognition and validation from the colonial state while spending significantly less energy on addressing our disconnection from our traditional territories and practices”. (Yerxa, 2014, p.163) The author discusses by focusing on seeking recognition from the colonizer the Anishinaabeg nationhood maintains a state of dependency instead of reclaiming their own land based practices and governance.

When we believe that the best way to resist Crown sovereignty takes place in the space of the courtroom and by engaging in the land claims process, the focus becomes about recognition and validation from the colonizer. Through this process we automatically negate what we are trying to assert - Anishinaabeg nationhood - because we grant authority to the Canadian state to decide matters over our lives and our lands. (Yerxa, 2014. p.163)

Indigenous peoples are reclaiming or regenerating their own cultures and knowledge systems, and their legal and political traditions to establish and built from within their communities. These initiatives are based on acts of self-determination and

resistance to having the Canadian government dictate or approve decisions made by Indigenous peoples for their own well-being and identity-making.

In her 2016 article, *Land & Reconciliation: Having the Right Conversations*, Leanne Betasamosake Simpson highlights that land is not mentioned in any of the TRC's recommendations yet explains how the residential schools was "a strategy used by Canada to break the connection between Indigenous peoples and our lands, so the state could access the land for settlement and for natural resources" (Simpson, 2016).

The deliberate act re-enforced by government policy was an attempt to "break the intimate connection between children and their families, their culture, their language and their land" (Simpson, 2016) with the subsequent goals of eradicating Indigenous education and traditional knowledge systems, and forms of governance and leadership.

Simpson shares how the Nishnaabeg nation acts as a "web of connections to each other, to the plant nations, the animal nations, the rivers and lakes, the cosmos, and our neighbouring Indigenous nations" (Simpson, 2016). This is what is meant by relations to all. This brings into focus land as a necessary to a respectful conversation. Simpson proposes a way forward "far from asking settler Canadians to pack up and leave, it is critical that we think about how we can better share land" (Simpson, 2016).

Section 3: A "shared" history

The first Prime Minister of Canada following the Canadian Confederation of 1867 attempted to address the "Native Question" which was blocking the settler colonial nation in its land expansion plans. One of the influential figures in the development of

policies aimed at Indigenous peoples was Herman Merivale, who acted as Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies from 1848 to 1859. In 1841, Merivale while Professor of Political Economy at Oxford developed and proposed four policy alternatives to solve the “Indian Question”: 1) Extermination (by death or enfranchisement); 2) Slavery; 3) Insulation (reserves) and/or 4) Amalgamation/Assimilation (Rheault, 2011 p. 1).

The latter was the official choice which was used in the development of Canadian policies of assimilation. These policies have contributed to the internalization of colonialism by Indigenous peoples and forced a dependency model. The nations’ systems of controls began with the Gradual Civilization Act of 1857 and the Gradual Enfranchisement Act of 1869 which were consolidated into the Indian Act in 1876.

The Indian Act “is a piece of legislation created under the British rule for the purpose of subjugating one race - Aboriginal people”. (Joseph, 2015)

The concept of Enfranchisement is important to the Canadian federal government’s assimilation policies. It is a legal process for ending a person’s Indian status making them a Canadian citizen. It was first introduced as voluntary under the Gradual Civilization Act based on “the assumption that Aboriginal people would be willing to surrender their legal and ancestral identities for the “privilege” of gaining full Canadian citizenship and assimilating into Canadian society” (Crey, 2009). Indigenous peoples were not willing to give up neither their identities nor their status rights.

Under the newly created Indian Act, a new mandatory set of rules were implemented for enfranchisement such as the loss on Indian status due to attending

university and being granted a degree in law or medicine, becoming a member of the clergy, for serving in the Canadian armed forces, or for Indigenous women who married non-Indian status men. This last issue has been contested under Bills C31 and C3, and more recently in a court case won by Dr. Lynn Gehl defending her right to belong to her Anishinaabe Nation (2017).

In an article for CBC News by Dr. Pamela Palmater, the Mi'kmaw lawyer and chair in Indigenous Governance at Ryerson University explains why Dr. Gehl's court challenge matters in the context of the Indian Act's discriminatory practices based on race, gender and marital status and why it should be important to Canadians. Palmater contextualises the information within a historical, social and human rights perspective. What is important to understand is how this section of the act contributes to the elimination of Indigenous identity and by extension their inherent rights. This functions as a form of genocide (UN, n.d.; TRC, 2015; Fontaine and Farber, 2013).

The imposition of a male dominated settler colonial model disrupted the role of women and gender fluid people in the varied Indigenous nations, clans and communities. This created situations of gender-based violence which continue today and are exposed in the numbers of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls.

"The Indian Act has a legislative extinction date for each First Nation in this country based on when their last status Indian and/or band member will be born" (Palmater, 2014). The Indian Act and subsequently Canadian government policies have been designed as "the final solution of the Indian problem" a statement from Duncan

Campbell Scott. In his role at the Department of Indian Affairs, Scott implemented the Compulsory residential school Bill and infamously stated (Rheault, 2011):

“I want to get rid of the Indian problem. I do not think as a matter of fact, that this country ought to continually protect a class of people who are able to stand alone. That is my whole point. Our object is to continue until there is not a single Indian in Canada that has not been absorbed into the body politic, and there is no Indian question, and no Indian department, that is the whole object of this Bill” (D. C. Scott, 1920)

The Indian Act and its predecessors acts have/are being used to define Indigenous identity, replace traditional government with band councils, determine the rights to practice distinct culture and traditions including speaking their own languages and maintaining their own Indigenous names, and create reserves to confine the Indigenous peoples to government defined land bases where the Indigenous peoples did not own the reserve lands. The government role of the Indian agent under the Indian Act was established to control the lives of First Nations peoples in their jurisdictions. A pass system was in place from 1885 until World War II whereby a Status Indian was not allowed to leave their reserve without the authority of the Indian agent in the form of a signed pass. (Hanson, n.d.; Joseph, 2015)

The White Paper proposed by Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau in 1969, was another government attempt by the Canadian state to assimilate Indigenous peoples. This policy paper proposed the dissolution of the Indian Act which would have eliminated the Federal and First Nation connection and by extension all rights associated to the historic relationship. The “just society” intention was to make all equal by giving all peoples in Canada full rights of citizenship by eliminating discrimination yet also extinguishing distinct Aboriginal rights. Although First Nations communities and

leaders had been part of a consultation process where “First Nations representatives consistently expressed concern about Aboriginal and treaty rights, title to the land, self-determination, and access to education and health care” (UBC, 2009) the White Paper did not include or address any of their concerns. It was rejected by First Nations’ leaders across the country and by “*non-Aboriginal Canadians who had historically supported federal assimilative policy for First Nations* [emphasis added] (Milloy, 2008).

On June 11, 2008, Stephen Harper, then Prime Minister of Canada, made a Statement of Apology to former students of Indian Residential Schools on behalf of the Government of Canada and all Canadians. The TRC report of 2015 addresses the apology stating that words are not enough and “for reconciliation to thrive in the coming years, Canada must move from apology to action” (TRC, 2015, p. 263).

There is extensive documentation and information about how Indigenous peoples have consistently “resisted oppression and sought active participation in defining and establishing their rights” (Hanson, n.d.). There have been Treaty agreements negotiated with the settlers that first arrived from Europe to ensure relationships based on mutual respect, petitions to the British monarchy and other leaders including international bodies such as the League of Nations and the United Nations to have the international treaty agreements and associated rights respected. Councils have been founded and other Indigenous political organizations to resist the state and be heard as distinct peoples, the resistance and rights movements begun in the 1960’s and ongoing today, commissions and inquiries such as the residential schools, extensive land claims cases, and acts of resistance in works of art, performance, writing, and music. The acts and spirit of resilience and persistence to be heard and respected humbles me.

The systemic settler attempts at erasure of Indigenous peoples and their cultures, their title to traditional lands and its resources, and their right to self-determination has not been successful. The Indigenous peoples' resistance to having their political, cultural and territorial rights extinguished by the Canadian government through assimilation and other types of policies is ongoing. Similarly, the insistence that the diplomatic agreements of the Treaties based on a mutually beneficial relationships and a shared land stewardship be honoured, respected and implemented.

And the truth of stolen land acknowledged and reparations made.

The United Nations (UN) Declaration of Indigenous Rights does provide a framework to address many of these issues. Canada had consistently resisted its full acceptance and implementation as a legal framework and according to yet even in its adoption it would appear that much work still remains to be done.

The UN Declaration is monumental *because it is the only human rights instrument created with the participation of the rights holders themselves* [emphasis added]. Further, it specifically recognizes that Indigenous peoples' rights are both collective and individual. The UN Declaration sets the floor for Indigenous peoples' rights – the minimum necessary to meet international human rights standards, not a ceiling. States are free to apply higher standards or stronger rights than those set out in the UN Declaration. (Indigenous Bar Association, 2011)

UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples was approved in September of 2007, after over 20 years of work, when 143 Member States voted in favour yet Canada was one of the four who voted against. Australia, New Zealand and the United States are the other three States voting against – all settler colonial countries with the same goals of land and resource appropriation. As per the statement released by the

United Nations (UN) News Center, the Canadian ambassador stated that Canada had “significant concerns” such as the provisions on lands, territories and resources “are overly broad, unclear and capable of a wide variety of interpretations” and could affect prior treaty settlements as well as “the provisions on the need for States to obtain free, prior and informed consent before it can act on matters affecting indigenous peoples were unduly restrictive” (UN News Center, 2007).

In May 2016 Canada officially adopted and promised to fully implement the UN Declaration of Indigenous Rights as a non-legally-binding document following the other 3 objectors who had changed their initial positions. In 2015, the private members’ Bill C-641 “United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act” was sponsored by Romeo Saganash, a Cree Member of Parliament. The proposed act was to ensure that the laws of Canada were in harmony with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. It was rejected.

It astounds and angers me that forms of genocide are ongoing in a country that considers itself tolerant and progressive. However I have come to recognize that I benefit from what is still being taken from Indigenous peoples. If I am committed to reconciliation then it is my responsibility to change my practices, speak out and seek Indigenous peoples on whose land I live to make restitution and open up the possibility of building new and mutually respectful relationships.

I do believe there is a growing awareness amongst non-Indigenous peoples of Canada’s failure to respect Indigenous peoples as fellow citizens of this land. What I have witnessed is a lack of respect and gap of informed knowing about the complex and

rich Indigenous systems of knowledge, government and culture, and the fundamental connection to land as central to Indigeneity. The core issue of stolen land seems absent from the public reconciliation discussions and when raised instills fear – fear based on the assumption it means loss of ownership and control of land and its resources. I strongly suspect this denial of both the theft of land and the breakdown of Indigenous identity resulting from the loss of relationship to land are detrimental to understanding the ongoing effects of colonialism as the source of societal and systemic challenges still impacting Indigenous peoples today.

7. Final Thoughts

From this research journey I learned more about the complexities in addressing the TRC's Calls to Action, from a settler view point. It was and is my intention to contribute to a discourse on further complicating the roles a settler can play in the Calls to Action. As someone who is just starting this research journey, I hope my narrative will highlight the inherent conflicts that occur when addressing a problem space that one is part of creating and affect change by encouraging others to take up the challenges of learning to respond to the Calls to Action.

When it comes down to it, finding “the question” is seldom that simple. Sometimes the question finds us. Sometimes questions are more like hunches, experienced tensions, or disjuncture sensed in our own lives. Going from clarity to fuzziness can be okay. Questions usually change as the inquiry proceeds. And sometimes the question that was answered is not clearly revealed until the end of the process. We have often found that throughout the process, we learn more about what it was we really wanted to know (Potts & Brown, 2005, 267).

It is my belief that an inclusive designer working in a Canadian context has a responsibility to become informed about their location within the larger reconciliation discussion as a member of a nation and by virtue of their work and social position. This can inform contributing in a spirit of respect based on acknowledging the truth and validity of Indigenous peoples' stories and experiences, and create design work that seeks justice by respectfully and continually re-informing what shapes our shared story.

I consider inclusive designers as social agents, in that design uses cultural norms, signifiers and structures to craft and deliver its services and products. In turn, these have social and cultural impacts on the people and communities exposed to them. With the density and infiltration of electronic media and devices in many peoples' lives this impact is extensive. These influences are complex and as a designer it is my belief there is a responsibility to strive to become consciously aware of the messages attached to design artefacts and practices. Design is social, and also political.

I believe it necessary to question the use of Eurocentric/Western dominant epistemological models. It's important to evaluate the suitability of dominant theoretical frameworks as they tend to replicate the conditions that inclusive design is often trying to address. I suggest this discussion is introduced into Inclusive Design graduate education. Without this practice embedded in the educational context how can students, and by extension faculty and the institution, be informed and held accountable for the impacts of their research process and their knowledge creation?

The theoretical frameworks I explored are valuable tools that can be used by inclusive designers in projects supporting the margins by moving these communities to

center and exposing how positionality and privilege influences the research and design process. As these frameworks support a variety of methods, they can be adapted to the specificity of the communities and individuals involved in each of the projects.

The realisation that my MRP was a research journey allowed me to situate myself within a framework that could capture a critical inquiry research process and locate the MRP as a manifestation of ongoing learning. I suggest that a research and design practice be constantly disrupted by encountering new approaches that question assumptions and biases while supporting emergent findings and developing reflexivity in that practice. This echoes Shawn Wilson's "If research doesn't change you as a person, then you haven't done it right" (Wilson, 2008) and how I envision inclusive design as being an ever evolving practice.

The concept of a journey allows the ongoing messiness that occurs when walking in new spaces while keeping one's mind, spirit and heart open to the process and being present to the people, communities and relations we are building.

Thank you for sharing my journey and I wish you well on yours.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Terminology

This section introduces concepts from three sources at the intersection of terminology and Indigenous peoples.

The United Nations (UN) Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues' fact sheet *Who are indigenous peoples?* (n.d.) explains that the UN has not adopted an official definition of "indigenous" and instead provides the following as a model for understanding the term:

- Self- identification as indigenous peoples at the individual level and accepted by the community as their member
- Historical continuity with pre-colonial and/or pre-settler societies
- Strong link to territories and surrounding natural resources
- Distinct social, economic or political systems
- Distinct language, culture and beliefs
- Form non-dominant groups of society
- Resolve to maintain and reproduce their ancestral environments and systems as distinctive peoples and communities. (UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, n.d.)

Bob Joseph, a Gwawaenuk Nation member and owner of Indigenous Corporate Training Inc. (ICT) situates the usage of terminology as follows:

The First Peoples of this land now known as Canada formerly had unique communities with unique names - there wasn't a need for collective nouns or complicated terminology. With European contact and ensuing colonization, the government required people to be defined and labeled for ease of governing (Joseph, 2016).

Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) is a federal government department that is "responsible for meeting the Government of Canada's obligations and commitments to First Nations, Inuit and Métis" (INAC, 2017). INAC administers the Indian Act and controls eligibility for Indian Status. INAC describes:

'Indigenous peoples' is a collective name for the original peoples of North America and their descendants. Often, 'Aboriginal peoples' is also used. The Canadian Constitution recognizes three groups of Aboriginal peoples: Indians (more commonly referred to as First Nations), Inuit and Métis. These are three distinct peoples with unique histories, languages, cultural practices and spiritual beliefs (INAC, 2017).