2015-09-22

Uncovering Colonial Legacies: Voices of Indigenous Youth in Child Welfare (dis)Placements

Navia, Daniela

UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY

Uncovering Colonial Legacies: Voices of Indigenous Youth in Child Welfare

(dis)Placements

by

Daniela Navia

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES

IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE

DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS

GRADUATE PROGRAM IN ANTHROPOLOGY

CALGARY, ALBERTA

SEPTEMBER, 2015

Abstract

In this thesis I examine how settler colonialism shapes child welfare (dis)placements. I use the term (dis)placement as a point of departure to understand the historical connection between the child welfare and residential school systems. Indigenous youth collaborators, who recently exited the child welfare system, contributed to this research through arts and storytelling. Their verbal and artistic testimonies attest to the degree that child welfare is part of larger historical and political processes including dispossession of land and resources, assimilation of Indigenous peoples, gendered violence, and violent indifference. I argue that youth resistance to dominant systems takes a distinct urban form and is a means of their survival that carries strong potential for change. This thesis highlights the value of a collaborative research praxis and contributes to broader debates on how Indigenous people experience colonialism and continuously create opportunities for transformation.

Note on terminology

Aboriginal is the constitutionally defined term in Canada for First Nations, Métis and Inuit communities (Constitution Act, 1982: section 35[2]). This term has been criticized on the grounds of its colonial origin (Pinto and Smiley, 2013) and as one that implies inferiority and otherness. I use the term *Indigenous* throughout this thesis as an inclusive and international term that describes communities and individuals who consider themselves to be related to civilizations that predate European colonization in the Americas, Pacific Islands, Australia, Asia, and Africa. Indigenous is a term that underscores the complexity of Indigenous identities beyond what has been officially defined in government data and supports self-determination (Pinto and Smiley, 2013). Individual youth quoted in this thesis also provide other terms for self-identification, such as Native, Aboriginal, and specific Nations and geographies, which I left unchanged.

This thesis, albeit a humble accomplishment, is dedicated to all of those who have been dispossessed of their rights to a dignified life by oppressive colonial systems. To those who remain unknowing of their true families, their true names, and their histories, and for those who are on a path to uncovering and resisting the legacy of ongoing pillage of Indigenous communities around the world. To our ancestors and the generations to come who provide us with the strength to keep fighting for a better existence for all.

Table of Contents

List of Figures and Illustrations

INTRODUCTION

In 2011, I was employed at a Canadian mental health agency as a researcher involved in compiling evaluation reports for a variety of programs from walk-in counselling to long-term treatment facilities. I was given access to data for over 30,000 children and youth and their families who used its services each year. I reported on client demographics, involvement in critical events (e.g., running away, violence, substance use), clinical progress and satisfaction, among other indicators. This is how I began learning about the child welfare system and the way it intersects with healthcare, legal, and educational systems.

Child welfare is a blanket term that captures a range of government funded services "focused on the well-being of children and youth, supporting families to be healthy, and ensuring children grow up in safe and nurturing homes."[1] Within child welfare, child protective services identify children and youth who may live in harmful environments and therefore should be apprehended from their homes and placed in substitute care. Placements vary in structure and composition and include foster homes, group homes, residential treatment, secure treatment, and detention centres (Timpson, 1990). As such, child welfare has been criticized for altering family structures and for failing to provide adequate environments for children and youth (Bullock et al., 2006). To underscore the reasons behind this failure, Roy Alfred Parker has argued that: "the very existence of *state* care means that certain rights and duties become invested in corporate organizations rather than private individuals." (1980, p.63, emphasis added)

Youth in substitute care are mandated to remain in placements, and are followed if they run away and forced to return. Internal reports at the mental health agency where I began working in 2011 reported a high frequency of running away among the youth under their care. Running away was perceived within the institution as a dangerous behaviour that they tried to minimize. In 2012, as part of my responsibilities I was given an opportunity to interview youth who ran away from residential treatment facilities and foster care. The goal of the interviews was to speak to youth to better understand their reasons for running away and how these related to

---

[1] Government of Alberta. (2014). Child Abuse & Intervention. Retrieved from
http://humanservices.alberta.ca/abuse-bullying/14841.html

their experiences in care (Navia, Newman, and Kontrimas, 2013). I conducted interviews with eight youth who ran away from the agency's facilities, six of whom were Indigenous. This experience helped me develop an understanding of how youth perceived child welfare placements.

One of the Indigenous participants in the running project provided the following commentary on the child welfare system:

> I got symptomed from CFS [Child and Family Services] when I was 11 in Winnipeg. They put me in care and I didn't like it. I ran away for a month and a half. They [police] went to ask for my picture, my dad gave them this fucked up ass picture of me and it didn't even look like me cause he didn't want me getting caught. We never liked CFS. — Calgary, August 2013.

This testimony indicates that she developed negative perceptions of child welfare services at a young age growing up in Winnipeg. As she resisted confinement, her family and friends were complicit in her resistance, pointing to a shared understanding among groups and across generations. She further explained her motivations for running away, its consequences and how they related to her perception of the system:

> I would AWOL [Absent Without Official Leave[2]], get kicked out of placements, they'd move me somewhere else. I've been to 20 placements. Shelters, group homes, locked placements, jail. I was in the Youth Centre and they were like 'You're coming to Calgary' and I just bawled by eyes out. I was like, 'I'm not even gonna be able to see my brothers. That's all you guys are good at, is like calling pigs and fucking pushing us away from our family, making up lies, writing papers…all you guys see in us is the shit that's on paper.' — *Indigenous project participant*, Calgary, August 2013.

She had been in 20 different placements since she first entered the child welfare system and had most recently been brought from a centre for young offenders in Manitoba to a residential treatment facility in Calgary. She emphasized child welfare's connection to the police and criminal justice as well as its role in separating families and displacing and marginalizing youth. Interviewing youth for the running project ignited my interest in how their everyday experiences were different from institutional perspectives that legitimized the role of the child

---

[2] Absent Without Official Leave (AWOL) was a term that youth, who were interviewed as part of the research project I conducted, commonly used to describe running away. Youth mentioned that this was a term that they first heard through their involvement with child welfare placements. The term originally refers to soldiers who abandon duty without permission.

welfare system as acting in the best interests of youth and their communities. In the interviews, I began to understand how youth used running as a form of resistance to child welfare placements which they described as a type of *jail*. I learned that youth were able to account for running away as a means to assert their autonomy and in many cases to escape undesirable or dangerous environments. However, reducing running behaviours was often a necessary strategy to prevent negative consequences (e.g., youth who continued to run away would not be discharged from treatment facilities or would be sent to jail for violating their court agreement). In general, the youth were insightful and critical, and had powerful stories to tell that challenged dominant institutional knowledge.

What I had previously thought of as an individual phenomenon, also had a collective history. I was able to speak to several youth who would often run together, thus hearing variations of the same stories from different youth. One story that was particularly striking was about a night when the majority of youth in residential treatment programs, governed by the mental health agency, ran away. This was a coordinated effort that demonstrated the ability of youth to organize together in acts of resistance. Police pursued youth for hours, flashing lights in the nearby woods and rounded them up one by one. Choosing to discuss this event at conferences and meetings while representing the mental health agency did not sit well with a few individuals in upper management who were in charge of residential and foster care programs.

I had initially expected that management would be concerned that my portrayal depicted the agency as violating the rights of youth to autonomy and safety. To my surprise, they were more worried about how bringing such incidents to light gave the appearance that they were not *in control* of these youth. This was a shared concern for both funders and community members (neighbours, community associations, etc.), many of whom had raised concerns about youth's negative impacts on neighbouring and broader communities. Youth, on the other hand, were critical of institutional practices that sought to limit their mobility and autonomy. For example, they discussed the practice of having their shoes taken away by staff to prevent them from running. This was an ineffective deterrent, as youth would hide shoes in nearby areas or wrap bags around their feet when they ran away, even in winter. I wondered how the practice of taking their shoes had come to be and was still tolerated. As I sought to understand these policies with others who had experience with the child welfare system, a friend who worked with youth

explained to me that the practice of taking shoes away from children had also been used in residential schools to prevent them from running away. This brought up concerns for me as to how institutional practices in these facilities become parts of larger political projects that endanger and marginalize specific groups.

While race had not been an explicit focus of the running project, the high representation of Indigenous participants (six of eight participants were Indigenous) sparked my interest about how being Indigenous shapes the experiences of youth and their involvement in the child welfare system. Placement in care was happening at a broader scale for Indigenous youth, which currently represent 69% of child welfare cases in Alberta.[3] The youth participants brought up concerns about being isolated from their families only to be placed in environments where they were treated unfairly and often experienced different form of abuse. Discussion with youth workers and other community members about the injustice facing Indigenous youth in care raised an important question for me: how much did child welfare placements really differ from residential schools? Within residential schools, Indigenous children were removed from their homes and placed in environments that were meant to assimilate them into Canadian society (Milloy, 1999). Simultaneously, these institutions facilitated state sanctioned violence toward Indigenous children, causing significant trauma for Indigenous communities (Agnes and Jack, 2006; Churchill, 2004; Deiter, 1999; Fournier and Crey, 1997; Jaine, 1995; Lomawaima, 1993; Haig-Brown, 1988). Child welfare and residential schools seemed to be linked as part of Indigenous communities' recent and ongoing experiences with dispossession and violence sanctioned by the settler colonial state. I wanted to develop a more nuanced understanding of the child welfare system in order to illuminate particular aspects of ongoing settler colonialism and resistance that are often made invisible. Through a collaborative decolonizing approach I sought to broaden the discussion by including Indigenous youth's stories and art in a conversation about ongoing colonialism.

---

[3] Human Services. (2013). Child Intervention Information and Statistics Summary 2013/14 First Quarter (June) Update. Retrieved from http://humanservices.alberta.ca/documents/child-intervention-info-stats-summary-2013-14-q1.pdf

In this thesis, I discuss what I have learned about settler colonialism from the lived experiences and artistic perspectives of Indigenous youth who have been in the child welfare system. I address the following research questions:

1. How does settler colonialism shape the lives of Indigenous youth who have been in the child welfare system?
2. What forms of resistance do youth employ and what are their implications?
3. How can artistic expression be used for resistance and advocacy by youth?

In the remaining part of this introduction, I discuss the nature of colonialism in Canada and demonstrate that the child welfare system has been shaped as its extension. In chapter one, I will situate my project within the body of literature on collaborative approaches in Anthropology and Critical Race Studies. I will outline the process I have undertaken to create dialogue and articulate how the experiences of youth reflect larger political and cultural processes. In chapters two and three, I focus on what can be learned from youth's perspectives and artwork for understanding settler colonialism and resistance. In conclusion, I discuss the implications of this research. This thesis has given me an opportunity to delve deeper into institutional practices that are often taken for granted and examine the potential of youth voices to contribute to a wider conversation about settler colonialism and resistance. By bringing forward perspectives that are often excluded within institutions this thesis contributes to broader debates on how Indigenous people experience colonialism and continuously create opportunities for transformation.

"Canada", whose home and Native land?

> *We also have no history of colonialism. So we have all of the things that many people admire about the great powers but none of the things that threaten or bother them.* — Prime Minister Stephen J. Harper, Pittsburgh G20 summit, September 2009.

My intention in this research has been to analyze how ongoing colonialism shapes Canada as a nation and is embedded in systems such as child welfare. I have found that too often in state discourses, violence toward Indigenous peoples is minimized or even erased. For example, the current Prime Minister's remarks, such as the one above, serve to reinforce a dominant perception that Canada does not have a history of violent dispossession of land from

Indigenous peoples or pervasive structures that contribute to their marginalization (Coulthard, 2014; Simpson, 2014). In contrast, Indigenous peoples continue to expose facets of colonialism in Canada and how it is present in both political processes and everyday life. Inspired by the work of Indigenous scholars Glen Coulthard and Audra Simpson, among others, I define s*ettler colonialism* as a process that has predicated the relationship of Indigenous people with the state and with the child welfare system throughout Canadian history (Coulthard, 2014; Simpson, 2014). These scholars examine how Indigenous peoples have systematically been marginalized in historical and current realities. Marginalization of Indigenous peoples is articulated through narratives within and outside academic circles. For example, Randy Demas, one of the youth collaborators for this thesis summarized the nature of colonialism in Canada:

> This was stolen land. It was the land that we all roamed free on. They came and they destroyed it. They put us in our place, took everything over and started developing. Mother Nature is dead, it is all White man's doing. It is in the culture too, money is everything. —Randy Demas, *youth collaborator*, Calgary, August 2014.

In his explanation, Demas covers many key aspects of academic conceptualizations of settler colonialism. A major unifying thread of Canada's colonial history is violence and institutionalized disempowerment of Indigenous communities. In the following section, I review particular chapters of Canadian history that would help to contextualize the everyday experiences of youth in relation to ongoing systemic violence. My discussion of settler colonialism is divided into three main themes of this history: dispossession of land, assimilation of Indigenous peoples and the heteropatriarchal state.

Dispossession of land

Turtle Island (more commonly known as North America) has been the home of many Indigenous communities for thousands of years. Prior to colonization, these communities organized diverse social and political systems and sustained themselves based on resources available from the land. The territories that are now known as Central and Southern Alberta, where this research took place, have been sustained by five Indigenous Nations: Siksika, Piikani,

Kainaiwa, Tsuu T'ina, and Nakoda.[4] The first three Nations have historically spoken dialects of Blackfoot, while the Tsuu T'ina and Nakoda each have their own languages. Métis, descendants of French traders and their Aboriginal partners, constitute a distinct culture and are acknowledged in this thesis among the Indigenous Nations that have shaped the history of this territory. Despite consistent efforts to eliminate and disempower them, each of these Nations still stands and has a rich cultural legacy as well as a history of resisting colonial violence.

In January of 2014 I attended a rally and round dance organized for the Athabasca Chipewayan First Nation (ACFN) Legal Defense, an initiative by Indigenous communities to protect the land from further environmental damage from extractive industries. The event was taking place in front of Jack Singer Concert Hall in Calgary, in support of Neil Young's "Honour the Treaties" tour. Gitz Deranger, an Indigenous activist from Fort McMurray, spoke into a megaphone and addressed the audience saying: "We are part of the Treaty Seven Nations. We are fighting to protect land that was taken away from us. This is Treaty Seven territory". With this statement, Deranger linked the dispossession of land from Indigenous communities to their current struggles for environmental justice. As I stood in the crowd, an older white man gave me a flier that argued in defense of oil extraction from the Tar Sands. The same man then approached Deranger and said: "Why the hell would I know that we are on Treaty Seven territory? That means nothing to me" (Calgary, January 2014). I was standing nearby as the man turned his attention to me asking: "Did *you* know what Treaty Seven Territory is?" He pled an authoritative ignorance, erasing histories of settler colonialism. Above all, this incident that took place in 2014 highlights the role of a settler logic where taking land for "productive" use is taken for granted.

Yellowknives Dene scholar, Glen Coulthard defines settler colonialism as predicated on the theft of indigenous land and on a prefixing on the accumulation of capital (2014). Under the philosophy of Terra Nullius (empty land, or land that is for the taking), land has become a site of conquest, to be used for productive ends for the colonial state. The establishment of Canada as a capitalist nation state has occurred at the expense of Indigenous peoples' rights over land. Patrick

---

[4] Heritage Community Foundation. (2010). Treaty 7: Past and Present. Retrieved from http://wayback.archive-it.org/2217/20101208160337/http://www.albertasource.ca/treaty7/index.html

Wolfe argues that the settler's desire for territory propels a process to "eliminate" those already living on that land (1999). Scholars estimate that during European settlement of Turtle Island 95% of Indigenous peoples were killed (Daschuck, 2013). Initially, there was an argument that Indigenous peoples were weakened because they became dependent on European goods (for critique of this earlier argument, see Daschuck, 2013). This was part of a larger discourse that framed Indigenous peoples as "primitive" and unable to survive under complex social structures and the capitalist mode of production, justifying European expansion (Coulthard, 2014, p.100). Subsequently, scholars have refuted this line of thinking, arguing that it was the biological warfare and erosion of subsistence base that led to a near extermination of Indigenous peoples and established their dependence on the Canadian state (Wolf, 2010; Morantz, 2002).

During the signing of Treaties, Indigenous peoples had little bargaining power. Historians have referred to the context of the treaties as *submit or starve*, and the American Indian Movement has stressed the Treaties' lack of legal validity as Indigenous peoples were coerced to sign them (Daschuck, 2013; Nagel, 1997). A total of 11 treaties were signed between Indigenous Nations and the Crown between 1871 and 1921. Legally, the Treaties represented a ceding of territories, which was inconceivable to many of the Chiefs who signed them because they did not think of land as property. Indigenous peoples were then displaced and forced into small tracts of land, named reserves. With the passing of the Indian Act in 1876, the territories allocated to Indigenous peoples were reduced even further. The reserve system in Canada was conducive to exploitation of Indigenous peoples and appropriation of their resources and was used as a model for Apartheid South Africa due to its efficacy (Lawrence, 2003). Métis scholar Howard Adams called reserves "prisons of grass" to highlight how they have served as a form of internment camps to limit the political power and visibility of Indigenous Nations (1989). Mohawk scholar Audra Simpson provides a similar powerful analysis of reserves calling them "protected spaces of 'unfreedom'… the topographic and deeply carceral remainders of what is left: deeply winnowed territories" (2014, p.181). The colonial relationship has thus involved the dispossession of land from Indigenous peoples and their subsequent *displacement* to regulated and controlled spaces. As such, displacement is a key method used by the settler colonial state to marginalize Indigenous people.

Assimilation of Indigenous peoples

Dispossession of land and subsequent dependency on the Canadian state created further challenges for Indigenous communities as the state introduced assimilationist policies. In 1857, the Act for the Gradual Civilization of Indian Tribes in Canada stressed that "it is desirable to encourage the progress of Civilization among the Indian Tribes, and the gradual removal of all legal distinctions between them and her Majesty's other Canadian subjects." (McGillivray, 1995, p.i). In order to achieve the diffusion of Indigenous Nations the state assumed legal jurisdiction over Indigenous peoples forming a paternal relationship that framed Indigenous peoples as perpetual children in need of control and reform. The Department of the Interior described this philosophy in 1877: "Our Indian legislation generally rests on the principle, that the aborigines are to be kept in a condition of tutelage and treated as wards or children of the State."[5] Accompanying these philosophies, a number of policies have sought to undermine Indigenous sovereignty and enact forced assimilation into Canadian society.

The Indian Act of 1876 is a primary example of paternalistic and assimilationist state policies targeting Indigenous peoples and limiting who could be recognized as Indigenous. Amendments to the Indian Act have also limited Indigenous peoples' access to courts, and banned the Potlatch and Sun Dance among other ceremonies, trying to eliminate Indigenous traditions and political visibility. The act itself institutionalized Indigenous identity under the law, creating Indian status based on government records of Indigenous peoples living on a reserve (Thobani, 2007; Fournier and Crey, 1998). It also encouraged Indigenous peoples to renounce or lose their status via enfranchisement. Indigenous individuals could be enfranchised by leaving the reserve, joining the military, or by attending university. Furthermore, Indigenous women would lose status if they married a man who was not considered a Status Indian. Children would also lose status if they were born out of wedlock to a mother with status and a father without status.[6] Additionally, Indigenous people would also lose status if they, at the age of 21, had a mother and paternal grandmother who did not have status before marriage.

---

[5] Department of the Interior, Annual Report for the year ended 30th June, 1876 (Parliament, Sessional Papers, No. 11, 1877), p.xiv.
[6] Today, children will still lose Indian status if their father does not confirm paternity.

Indigenous children became prime targets of assimilationist policies by becoming wards of the state through residential schools, which were established in Canada after the passing of the 1884 amendment to the Indian Act. By the end of the nineteenth century, the Canadian state began to focus on childhood as both social problem and the focus of charitable and state projects of citizenship (McGillivray, 1995; Dingwall et al., 1984). Residential schools emerged as part of this broader shift in Canadian society from governance of the family to governance through the family,[7] which Anne McGillivray describes as the colonization of childhood through the state (1995). Initially, residential schools were a form of state care for Indigenous children who were considered to be abused or neglected in their homes, and therefore acted as a form of "child welfare" care for Indigenous children (Milloy, 1999). By 1920, all Indigenous school age children (including children as young as four) were mandated to attend the schools, leave their homes, and would be pursued or arrested if they failed to attend.[8] The separation of children from their families and communities and bringing them to schools that were often hundreds of kilometers away from their homes was deemed instrumental to "civilizing" Indigenous children (McGillivray, 1995).

In residential schools, children were forced into a new cultural universe that sought to render them homogenous (Miller, 2000). Their hair was cut or shaved, they were separated by age and gender, denied contact with siblings and given new names. Residential schools' curriculum rarely went above a grade 3-5 level and was combined with manual and domestic labour. Speaking an Aboriginal language was prohibited or severely restricted and punishment for infraction could be severe (Miller, 2000). Scholars have documented many of the atrocities that occurred including removal of children from their homes and communities, unsafe living conditions, lack of adequate medical attention and diet and rampant sexual abuse (Agnes and Jack, 2006; Churchill, 2004; Deiter, 1999; Fournier and Crey, 1997; Jaine, 1995; Lomawaima, 1993; Haig-Brown, 1988). In 1912 Indian Affairs Medical Officer P.H. Bryce reported that "it is

---

[7] In the late nineteenth century, family became the focus of several state projects in Canada leading to the creation of residential schools targeting Indigenous youth and the child welfare system targeting poor families of settler origin (Donzelot, Hurley & Deleuze, 1980; pp 88-89).

[8] An Act to amend the Indian Act. (1920). S. C. 1919-20, c. 50. (10-11 Geo. V.). Retrieved from http://epe.lac-bac.gc.ca/100/205/301/ic/cdc/aboriginaldocs/m-stat.htm

quite within the mark to say that fifty per cent of the children who passed through these schools did not live to benefit from the education which they received therein" (Miller, 2000, p.213).

Heteropatriarchal state

Dispossession of land and assimilation are interlinked with the marginalization of particular groups within Indigenous communities. Indigenous feminist and queer analyses have been helpful to understand the complexities of settler colonialism (Simpson, 2014; Morgensen, 2011; Smith, 2005). Audra Simpson refers to the Canadian state as a savage state that reveals its face as a male, white (or seeking to center whiteness) and heteropatricarchal (2014). *Heteropatriarchy* refers to a system of disadvantage that enforces gender and sexual norms and privileges masculinity. Heteropatriarchy describes the gendered nature of settler colonialism, as violence targeting women and two-spirit peoples[9] is enacted and sanctioned by the state in order to secure its sovereignty (Simpson, 2014; Morgensen, 2011).Women and two-spirit identities were valued and even revered among many precolonial societies in Turtle Island (Morgensen, 2011). Through the enactment of heteropatriarchy, they are now among the most marginalized within Indigenous communities.

Andrea Smith chronicles in her book *Conquest: Sexual violence and the American Indian genocide*, how sexual violence against Indigenous women has been a primary tactic of European settlers in North America to dismantle Indigenous societies (2005). Historically, settler society has justified this form of violence by rendering Indigenous women as less valuable and expendable because of what they represent: land, reproduction, Indigenous kinship and governance along matrilineal lines. Smith argues that the symbolic association of Indigenous women's bodies with land justifies the desire to eliminate them, as they are contaminating to the white settler social order (2005, p.10). Similarly, Indigenous two-spirit peoples have been considered "outside the norm of white settler society" (Smith, 2005, p.125), therefore guiding efforts to erase queer subjects. As a result, heteropatriarchal values have been imposed on

---

[9] The term two-spirit is an umbrella term that captures Indigenous gender and sexual identities outside of heteronormativity, or individuals who embody both male and female characteristics and roles.

Indigenous communities. For example, Métis scholar Maria Campbell describes in her book *Half-breed* how the Jesuits taught Indigenous men to beat women in order to assert their power, therefore normalizing violence against women (1973).

Scholars have also brought forth feminist critiques of how Indigenous communities have become entangled in conflicts that pit the rights of women against struggles for sovereignty (Simpson, 2014; Campbell, 1973). In this respect, Simpson chronicles how ongoing political struggles of Indigenous women led to an amendment of the Indian Act under Bill C-31 that would reinstate status to thousands of women who had lost it by marrying white men or non-status Indigenous men. Many communities resisted this amendment in order to regulate membership under their own criteria, such as the Mohawk reserve Kahnawa:ke, which currently denies membership status for those whose blood quantum is less than 50% and evicted 200 women who had married non-Indigenous persons in 2010 (Simpson, 2014). These are controversial practices, criticized for unfairly targeting women and supporting the shift away from the pre-existing matrilineal kinship structure prior to colonization. On the other hand, conferring rights to these Indigenous women through the Canadian state is argued to represent a threat to Indigenous sovereignty, as reinstatement of their membership would allow white men to reside on reserves and participate in local political processes. Simpson argues that internal band membership policies are not just indicative of gender inequality within Kahnawa:ke territory but are an expression of Indigenous nationalism and a way to protect limited resources and land from non-Indigenous men (Simpson, 2014, p.58). Simpson argues that ongoing violence against Indigenous women is not merely the product of inadequate policies or "lateral violence" but rather the effect of ongoing historical practices to disempower and assimilate Indigenous peoples (2014). The concept of heteropatriarchy is useful for the study of child welfare, as it provides an entry point to understanding how Indigenous women's bodies and child rearing practices are policed and managed by the state. These studies also help contextualize how violence may be experienced by the most vulnerable among racialized groups in Canada.

The "Reconciliation" Era

After the last official residential school was closed in 1996, Prime Minister Stephen J. Harper offered a public apology in 2008 to those directly affected and initiated a reparations process for victims of the residential school system (Regan, 2010). These events opened what has been named the Reconciliation Era, marked with the creation of discourses of creating healing for Indigenous communities to correct historical wrongs and improving their relationship with the Canadian state (Regan, 2010). Glen Coulthard refers to the current discourse as the politics of recognition, which he describes as "models of liberal pluralism that seek to 'reconcile' Indigenous assertions of nationhood within settler sovereignty via the accommodation of Indigenous identity claims in some form of renewed legal and political relationship with the Canadian state" (2014, p.3). The residential school apology and reparations were indicative of an emphasis in moving forward from past injustices to foster an amicable relationship.

Health Canada has admitted that residential schools caused significant trauma for Indigenous communities at the hands of the state.[10] Intergenerational trauma has become a dominant narrative within the reconciliation era seeking to explain how current issues facing Indigenous communities emerged as a consequence of the residential school system (e.g., Menzies, 2008; Braveheart, 2003). Yet, Glen Coulthard argues that reconciliation presents very limited opportunities for foundational change, framing Indigenous peoples as the primary object of repair while leaving the structure of the colonial relationship unchallenged (Coulthard, 2014, p.127). The current focus on residential schools to embody the negative impact of the settler colonial state relegates colonial violence to a past "event" rather than a pervasive structure (Coulthard, 2014, p.125; Wolfe; 2006). Therefore, reconciliation is a process of *overing,* or a call for disadvantaged groups to "get over it", rising above their past experiences and reconciling with the state (Ahmed, 2012). Coulthard argues that the shift towards reconciliation emerged out of the Canadian state's fear of increased militancy in Indigenous communities and escalating actions that challenged the integrity of the state's integrity and thus exemplifies its push to

---

[10] Health Canada. (2013). First Nations and Inuit health: mental health and wellness. Retrieved from http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fniah-spnia/promotion/mental/index-eng.php

eliminate anti-colonial resistance (2014, p.120). Mohawk scholar Taiaiake Alfred asserts in the prologue of *Red Skins, White Masks: Rejecting the Colonial Politics of Recognition* by Glen Coulthard that reconciliation processes reduce the scope of colonialism in Canada to one failed policy, convincing many Canadians to turn a "blind eye to the ongoing crimes of theft, fraud, and abuse against the original people of the land that are still the unacceptable reality in Canada" (in Coulthard, 2014, p.x).

Less than a year after the public apology, Harper publicly stated that Canada did not have a colonial legacy at the G20 summit. These discrepant acts illustrate the ambivalence of the Canadian state to acknowledge its wrongdoings toward Indigenous peoples and how they relate to larger historical processes. Harper displays a form of historical amnesia, as if having publicly apologized for past wrongdoings would permanently relegate these events to obscurity and to a distant forgotten past. Or perhaps more troubling, he does not see the residential school system as a colonial practice. There is surmounting evidence that shows how settler colonialism persists in Canada, however the Canadian state refuses to address it as an ongoing systemic practice. Indigenous peoples continue to be marginalized (or as some of the youth collaborators featured in this thesis would say "kept at the bottom") in Canada, accounting for a large portion of urban homeless populations, ranging from 11-96% across Canadian cities (Belanger, Weasel Head and Awosoga, 2012), and 36% of the total federal inmate population.[11] Suicide and self-inflicted injuries are reported as the leading cause of death for First Nations youth and adults up to forty-four years of age.[12] Recently, a report by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police also revealed that there were more than 1100 Indigenous women who had gone missing or been murdered in Canada since 1999 and that police has been reluctant to investigate these cases.[13]

Despite continuous oppression and marginalization, as Audra Simpson argues, settler colonialism also represents "ongoing failure to eliminate Indigenous peoples; take their land, absorb them into a white, property-owning body politic" (2014, pp.7-8). This failure is

---

[11] Statistics Canada. (2011). Aboriginal people as a proportion of admissions to remand, provincial and territorial sentenced custody, probation and conditional sentence, by jurisdiction, 2007/2008. Retrieved from http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/85-002-x/2009003/article/10903/tbl/t4-eng.htm

[12] Health Canada. (2006). First Nations & Inuit Health: Suicide Prevention. Ottawa: Health Canada. Retrieved from http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fniah-spnia/promotion/suicide/index-eng.php

[13] Royal Canadian Mounted Police. (2014). Missing and Murdered Aboriginal Women: A National Operational Overview. Retrieved from http://www.rcmp-grc.gc.ca/pubs/mmaw-faapd-eng.htm

exemplified through the sustained growth of Indigenous populations in Canada.[14] Furthermore, the majority of Indigenous populations now reside in urban areas rather than reserves which makes them more visible to non-Indigenous Canadians than ever before.[15] Waves of recent resistance such as the *Idle No More* movement[16] are evidence that Indigenous people have resisted reconciliation discourse that relegate harm done to the past and continue to fight for their sovereignty and rights by standing up against extractive industries and destructive state policies.

Indigenous peoples represent the youngest racial grouping in Canada, as more than half of them are under 18 years of age.[13] This raises questions of how Indigenous youth are positioned in relation to colonial structures. While youth's role in the Idle No More movement has been variable, youth are generally recognized as having the power to create a better world (Kino-nda-niimi Collective [eds.], 2014). They are labeled the *seventh generation*, the first generation that has not seen the impact of residential schools first hand (Bergstrom et al., 2003). I support the notion of Indigenous youth as a catalyst for change, but I also treat them as a demographic that has not been exempt from ongoing colonial violence and that is specifically targeted as part of the colonial project through the child welfare system.

In sum, Indigenous peoples have been subjected to dispossession of land and resources, assimilationist policies and the enforcement of a heteropatriarchal state for centuries. Critical analysis of reconciliation era discourse challenges the perception that inequality for Indigenous peoples can simply be attributed to the "legacy" of residential schools. Further effort is needed to examine whether or not similar systems to residential schools are currently promoting the colonization of childhood by the state. With this in mind, I turn my attention to child welfare intending to investigate how this system may actively aid in the disempowerment of Indigenous people and their communities and perpetuate ongoing violence.

---

[14] Statistics Canada. (2011). Aboriginal Peoples in Canada: First Nations People, Metis and Inuit. National Household Survey Retrieved from http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/nhs-enm/2011/as-sa/99-011-x/99-011-x2011001-eng.cfm

[15] Statistics Canada. (2008). Aboriginal Peoples in Canada in 2006: Inuit, Métis, and First Nations, 2006 Census. Ottawa: Minister of Industry. Retrieved from http://www12.statcan.ca/census-recensement/2006/as-sa/97-558/pdf/97-558-XIE2006001.pdf

[16] Four women founded the Idle No More movement in December 2014 to protest impending parliamentary bills and their impact on Indigenous sovereignty and environmental protections. This ongoing movement has led to hundreds of teach-ins, rallies, and protests within and outside of Canada.

Child welfare (dis)placements

In 2008, Indigenous children and youth comprised up to 85% of all children and youth in out of home care in Canadian provinces (Sinha et al., 2011). Given that Indigenous people compose about 4.3% of the Canadian population (Statistics Canada, 2011), this suggests that the child welfare system operates in a racialized manner, specifically targeting Indigenous families. Indigenous youth are also more likely to enter residential treatment and secure treatment, which are more restrictive forms of placement, and to stay in such care longer than non-Indigenous youth (McKenzie, 2002). Research indicates that child welfare service providers are more likely to investigate Indigenous families for neglect and emotional maltreatment than non-Indigenous families (Sinha et al., 2011; Trocme, Knocke and Blackstock, 2004). Investigations into the home environment for Indigenous families are more likely to lead to a placement in out of home care for identified children and youth (Trocme, Knocke and Blackstock, 2004). Sinha and colleagues examined the drivers of placement of Indigenous children in the child welfare system and found that risk factors including poverty, substance misuse, domestic violence, and social isolation within the family predict placement decisions (2011). Structural violence occurs as Indigenous people are targeted by the child welfare system and are seen as deficient due to exhibiting symptoms of having experienced colonial violence. By removing children from homes, rather than addressing the root causes, the cycle of poverty and ongoing dispossession and displacement of Indigenous communities continues.

Tracing historical roots of the system is an important starting point for understanding the colonial origin of child welfare in relation to Indigenous children and youth. As noted earlier, the child welfare system emerged in the late 19th century as part of a shift in state interventions focusing on the family which led to a massive expansion of child welfare programs in Canada (McGillivray, 1995). The residential school system targeted Indigenous families, while child welfare targeted other families of marginal social status through intervention and removal (Ursel, 1992). Under the rationale that Indigenous youth would receive a better education in the general school system, the government transitioned many children out of residential schools (Johnston, 1983). Simultaneously, the placement of Indigenous youth in care in significant numbers replaced the residential school system (Assembly of First Nations, 2006; Blackstock, Trocme

and Bennett, 2004; Royal Commission of Aboriginal Peoples, 1996). An amendment to the Indian Act in 1951 gave child welfare agencies a larger role in the lives of Indigenous families, leading to what became known as the *Sixties Scoop*, a mass removal of Indigenous children and youth from their homes, predominantly into non-Indigenous households that was frequently done without the knowledge or consent of families and band councils (Sinclair, 2007; Johnston, 1983). In 1985, Justice Edwin Kimelman released a report critiquing the apprehension of Indigenous children that had been occurring since the amendment, concluding that "cultural genocide has taken place in a systematic, routine manner" (Kimelman and Manitoba Department of Community Services and Corrections, 1985, p.51) He also brought attention to the practice of adopting children out to American families, referring to it as a form of human trafficking or the "wholesale exportation" of Indigenous children (Kimelman and Manitoba Department of Community Services and Corrections, 1985, p.62).[17]

Child welfare is primarily funded by provincial governments, with the exception of service delivery within most reserves, which is funded by Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, a department of the federal government of Canada (Government of Alberta, 2012). There has been a history of First Nations actively pushing to take control of child welfare systems on reserves since the 1960s. While much of these efforts have been effective in allowing First Nations to establish their own services, these services are grossly underfunded and are subject to heavy regulation and control from the federal government (Auditor General of Canada, 2008; Blackstock, Prakash, Loxley and Wien, 2005). Gitksan scholar and Executive Director of the First Nations Child and Family Caring Society of Canada, Cindy Blackstock notes that while many voices within the child welfare system acknowledge its past failure to Indigenous families and communities, the system has remained relatively unchanged (2012). In fact, the number of out-of-home care placements for youth living on reserves increased by 71.5% between 1995 and 2001 (McKenzie, 2002). In 2001, there were three times the number of Indigenous youth in child welfare placements than the number of youth placed in residential schools at the cusp of the residential school movement (Blackstock, 2003, see figure 1). The current apprehension of

---

[17] American Adoption agencies would pay up to $4,000 for each Indigenous child to child welfare (Fournier and Crey, 1997).

Indigenous children from their homes and communities at overwhelming rates has been dubbed the Millennium Scoop, to call attention to the historical continuity between the Sixties Scoop and the current situation (Sinclair, 2007). Scholars and advocates continue to criticize the child welfare system for a lack of resources given to address the issues within communities that lead to child welfare placements (Trocme, Knoke and Blackstock, 2004). They also argue that inadequate care is provided to Indigenous children and youth within the system due to xenophobia and ethnocentric values (Carriere, 2010; Harding, 2010; Harding, 2009; United Nations, 2003).

Moving children to a substitute care environment is referred to within child welfare as a *placement*. The term *placement* renders invisible youth's ties to their communities and the loss that Indigenous families experience when children are placed in care. While removal from a home environment is often intended to be temporary, many children and youth never return home or remain disconnected from their birth families well into adulthood. Given the history of how these practices have distanced Indigenous youth from their communities of origin, the placement of Indigenous youth in substitute care is a form of *(dis)placement*. Displacement through child welfare has been linked to issues of identity and loss of sense of place (Carriere, 2010), mental health and behavioural issues, including substance use, depression, and suicide (Patterson et al., 2015; Carriere. 2010; Roos et al., 2014), homelessness, and low educational
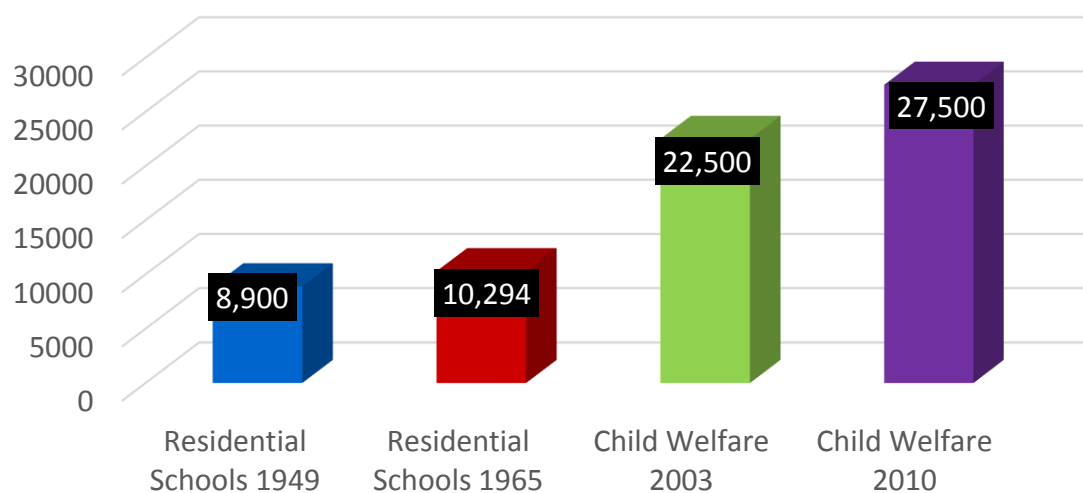
Figure 1. Number of Indigenous children in residential schools and child welfare across Canada

success (Roos et al., 2014; Patterson et. al, 2015), inconsistent employment and early pregnancy (Patterson et al., 2015). Each of these outcomes are indicative of marginalization, which is why the over-representation of Indigenous families in the child welfare system also raises questions of how this system may perpetuate existing inequality. Critiques of the child welfare system are similar to critiques of residential schools, identifying the system as a tool for assimilation that further disintegrates Indigenous cultures, traumatizing children and youth by placing them with non-Indigenous families or service providers and distancing them from their communities[18] (Blackstock, Trocme and Bennett, 2004; Carriere, 2010; Carriere, 2008; Sinclair, 2007). Therefore, I use the term *(dis)placement* to bring attention to the potential for erasure of a past history through placement in child welfare and in protest of systems that appear to be complicit in the marginalization of Indigenous peoples.

Child welfare has recently been the subject of some public scrutiny in Alberta as media reported deaths of hundreds of children and youth in their custody. Originally, a collaborative investigation by journalists working for the Calgary Herald and the Edmonton Journal revealed that 145 children and youth have died while in foster care in Alberta since 1999.[19] Most of these deaths had not undergone an investigation, and only 56 appeared in government reports. Among 94 children and youth whose ethnicity was recorded in government files, 78.7% were Indigenous. The investigation brought up issues of transparency and accountability from government officials regarding the care provided to Indigenous and non-Indigenous children and youth. After the original investigation conducted by the media outlets, the Alberta government revealed that a total of 741 children and youth involved in child welfare had died between 1999 and 2012 and released a brief report examining the factors associated with death in care of child welfare services.[20] While the number of Indigenous children who had died in care was not

---

[18] The Truth and Reconciliation Commission recently released a report examining the impact of residential schools that incorporated a critique of the current child welfare system citing that "placements are often culturally inappropriate and, tragically, simply unsafe. The child-welfare system is the residential school system of our day." (Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 2015, p.105)

[19] Kleiss, K., Henton, D. (2013). Fatal Care: Foster care tragedies cloaked in secrecy. They suffocated in bed, committed suicide, succumbed to disease — 145 Alberta children died in foster care since 1999, and the government hasn't told you. Retrieved from
http://www.calgaryherald.com/news/Fatal+care+Foster+care+tragedies+cloaked+secrecy/9203131/story.html

[20] Kleiss, K. (2014). Alberta reveals hundreds more children died while receiving provincial care: Roundtable to review deaths in foster care. Retrieved from

included, the report confirmed that Indigenous children are more likely to die in care of child welfare than non-Indigenous children. Figure 2 depicts the difference in cause of death for Indigenous and non-Indigenous children.[21] While all categories are higher for Indigenous children, suicide and homicide have the largest discrepancy.

After the controversy regarding deaths of children in care emerged in Alberta, the case of Tina Fontaine brought attention to similar issues across Canada. Fontaine, a fifteen year old Indigenous woman, was brutally murdered while she was in custody of child welfare.[22] She was originally from Sagkeeng Nation in Southern Manitoba and was taken to a foster home in Winnipeg a month prior to her death. In August, 2014, Fontaine's body was found in the Red River in Winnipeg, Manitoba. She is one of six reported cases of Indigenous women who have
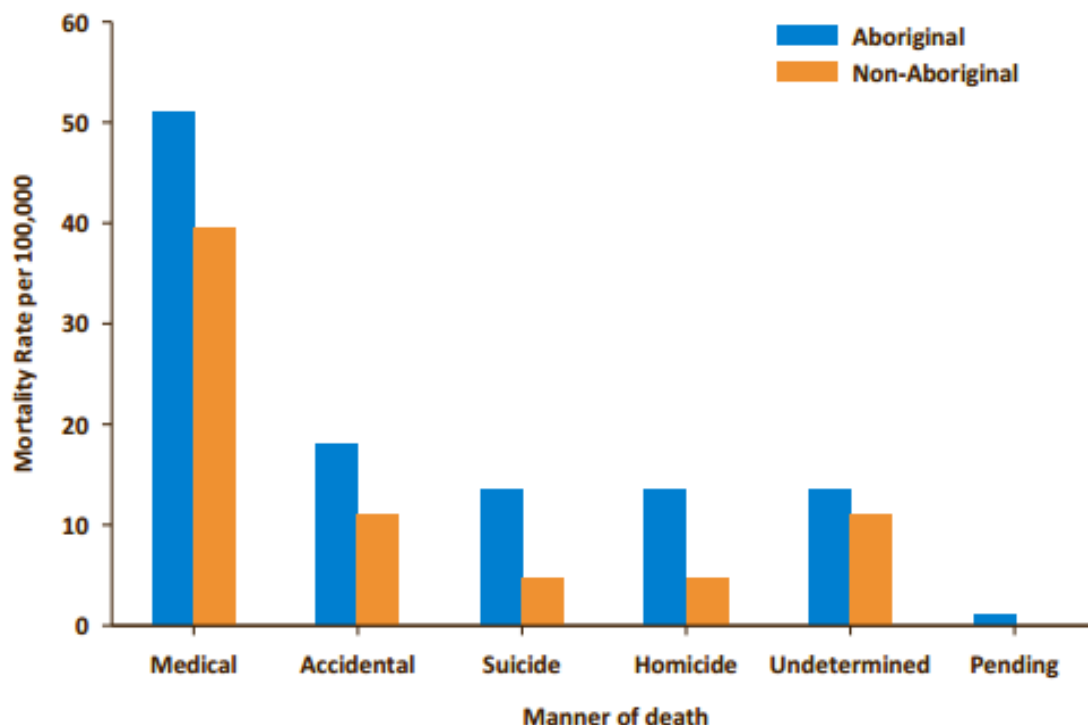
Figure 2. Alberta child welfare mortality rate by manner of death and Aboriginal status, for children in care aged 0-17 years, 1999-2012

http://www.edmontonjournal.com/Alberta+reveals+hundreds+more+children+died+while+receiving+provincial+care/9364286/story.html
[21] Human Services. (2014). A preliminary analysis of mortalities in the child intervention system in Alberta. Retrieved from http://humanservices.alberta.ca/documents/accfcr-analysis-mortalities.pdf
[22] CBC News. (2014). Tina Fontaine, 15, found in bag in Red River. Retrieved from http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/manitoba/tina-fontaine-15-found-in-bag-in-red-river-1.2739141

recently gone missing or been murdered from Sagkeeng Nation.[23] Homicide investigator Sgt. John O'Donovan claimed that: "she was rebelling in that care she was in. She was running away and had a history of that… I'm sure she didn't realize the danger she was putting herself in".[20] O'Donovan's assertion frames Fontaine's death as a case of her unknowingly exposing herself to risk by running away from a foster home. However, Fontaine's death is underpinned by larger systemic and structural issues. The fact that she died while she was running away implicates the child welfare system in her death. Fontaine's great aunt Thelma Favel asserted "If they [child welfare and the police] were doing their job, would Tina still be here? They failed her… All those agencies failed her".[21] Fontaine's death serves as a reminder that in order to understand the death of Indigenous children in care, it is important to learn more about their lives and their interactions with the child welfare system.

Genuine engagement of Indigenous peoples and their worldviews has been emphasized as key to the decolonization of the child welfare system (United Nations, 2003; Reid, 2005). This process has often meant seeking the perspectives of Indigenous social workers, parents, and foster parents (Long and Shepton, 2011; Bessarab and Crawford, 2010; Carreire, 2010; Reid, 2005). There is also a need to examine how youth conceptualize structural inequities in relation to their experiences (Gray, 2011; Chapman et al., 2004; Carreire, 2008) and how they relate to the politics of recognition. In the next chapter, I discuss how the placement of Indigenous youth can be better understood through youth's stories, voices and artwork. But first, I will describe my approach and outline how this project has developed, seeking to amplify the conversation about ongoing settler colonialism.

---

[23] CBC News. (2015). Sagkeeng First Nation has most unsolved cases of missing or murdered indigenous women Retrieved from http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/manitoba/sagkeeng-first-nation-has-most-unsolved-cases-of-missing-or-murdered-indigenous-women-1.3025156

CHAPTER 1. METHODOLOGY AND APPROACH

Toward a decolonizing pedagogy of solidarity

Representation of racialized peoples in hegemonic discourse has long been the subject of critical scholarly analysis (Asad, 1973). Historically, anthropological studies on Indigenous peoples have focused on culture and often reified depictions of timeless traditions and remnants of the past, fetishizing Indigenous peoples and effectively excluding an analysis of how they have been impacted by and resisted colonialism (for critical analysis of the scholarship see Deloria, 1988; Wolf, 2010; Simpson, 2011, 2014). As a result of anti-colonial struggles around the world, post-colonial and subaltern studies have generated knowledge on the impact of colonization and possibilities to challenge and undermine empire (Spivak, 2003; Comaroff and Comaroff, 2003). Indigenous scholars have produced research that is critical of broader power structures in (re)shaping Indigenous cultures and includes Indigenous voices and varied experiences of their bearers (Simpson, 2014, p.163; Hunt, 2014). This effort has helped to reconceptualise Indigenous knowledge as "relational and alive" (Hunt, 2014, p.31) and as a product on ongoing historical processes. Indigenous scholars speaking for themselves interrupt portraits of "timelessness, procedure and function that dominate representation of their past, and sometimes their present" (Simpson, 2014, p.97).

Indigenous scholars have made a major contribution by advancing "decolonizing" as a research praxis, which entails purposeful acknowledgement of how inequality shapes experiences and a commitment to reciprocal relationships between academics and partnering communities (Wilson, 2008; Smith, 1999). Decolonizing research requires the researcher to step beyond the position of 'expert' in order to also be a witness or listener and to support systemic change. Scholars have argued that decolonization has often been misused to describe a process to expand settler thinking and recognize Indigenous peoples without challenging colonial processes. For example, Kwakwaka'wakw scholar Sarah Hunt warns that through a lack of Indigenous scholars in Geography, there is a danger that decolonization praxis will be an extension of past discourses of how to engage with the other (2014, p.31). The essay

"Decolonization is not a metaphor" by Eve Tuck and Wayne Yang examines how decolonizing has been misappropriated primarily by non-Indigenous people, in ways that obscure the dynamics of colonization (Tuck and Yang, 2012). The co-authors argue that reducing decolonization to a metaphor enables "settler moves to innocence", attempting to reconcile settler guilt and complicity without seeking to challenge unfair social structures (2012, p.1).

As a non-Indigenous Latina migrant, I am pursuing research with Indigenous peoples under what Ruben Gatztambide-Fernandez describes as a pedagogy of decolonizing solidarity (2012). [24] I am interested in moving away from "explaining or enhancing existing social arrangements, seeking instead to challenge such arrangements and their implied colonial logic" (Gatztambide-Fernandez, 2012, p.49). Therefore, I am challenging settler colonialism, taking the experience of colonization and the racialized other as a point of departure. My experiences with migration and discrimination serve as a strong foundation in which I ground myself in this research. I have been inspired by the work of No One is Illegal, an activist group that frames migrant issues as inextricably connected to Indigenous issues under the banner of border imperialism, which regulates the claims to land and movement of groups through borders (Walia, 2013).

The encounter between Indigenous and diasporic communities presents opportunities for valuable solidarity as well as challenges. Decolonization can be regarded as a "common interest" that unites Indigenous peoples and other racialized populations (Gatztambide-Fernandez, 2012, p.61). However, distinct histories of oppression and resistance often complicate the relationship between these two groups as non-Indigenous migrants are complicit in the enactment of settler colonial violence towards Indigenous peoples. Andrea Smith argues that within the logic of white supremacy, reasonable solutions to the problems of some marginalized groups compound the subjugation of others (Smith, 2006). For example, for many migrants, inclusion and acceptance into the Canadian state has been construed as a potential solution to racial inequality. This perspective leaves the colonial relationship between the state and Indigenous peoples

---

[24] Henry Giroux defines pedagogy as linking "the notions of schooling and the broader category of education to a more substantive struggle for a radical democratic society" (1992, p.28). In the context of postcolonial and critical scholarship, pedagogy requires seeking to challenge and dismantle what Aruna Srivastava describes as relationships within the academy "that are identical to and indeed a consequence of the imperialistic impulse" (1995, p.17).

unchallenged. Therefore, in order to pursue a pedagogy of decolonizing solidarity, non-Indigenous migrants must acknowledge that we are not innocent in the oppression of Indigenous peoples and should work to organize together.

I have been guided in this project by a desire to resist settler colonialism and support the political struggles of Indigenous peoples. Academic critiques of decolonization discourses argue that metaphorical colonization, or a decolonization of settler mindsets is inadequate unless it supports Indigenous struggles for self-determination and sovereignty (Tuck and Yang, 2012). In research, this presents a challenge for non-Indigenous people to alter their praxis to better support Indigenous voices and redistribute power. In this regard, collaborative approaches may be useful to undermine the colonial structures that have dictated depictions of Indigenous lives and knowledge in academia.

A collaborative approach

Scholars have stressed the need to support Indigenous youth's voices as part of challenging hegemonic assumptions about "problem" individuals (Menzies, 2008; Reid, 2005; Mutua and Swadener, 2004; Smith, 1999). As noted earlier, the voices of youth in the child welfare system, have been largely excluded from research. With this inquiry I seek to challenge notions of youth as categories to be spoken for, posing instead that they are recognized as actors in their social world who are capable of communicating complex narratives of the issues that affect them (Gray, 2011; Chapman et al., 2004; Carreire, 2008). A collaborative approach is particularly useful to magnify and support youth voices.

The El Dorado Task Force of the American Anthropological Association defines collaborative research as "side by side work of all parties in a mutually beneficial research program (in Lassiter 2005, p. ix). Collaborative approaches have been developed as a way to address some of the issues with appropriation and misuse of knowledge in Anthropology and incorporate valuable perspectives and feedback from community members represented in texts (Lassiter, 2005). Acknowledging research participants as knowledge keepers and collaborators is a beneficial strategy to mitigate the risk of misrepresentation and encourage critical dialogue (Jahnke and Gillies, 2012; Mitchell, 2006). Collaborative ethnography is an iterative process

where different groups deliberately shape the research and final products to benefit to those involved (Marcus and Fischer, 1986). Within Indigenous contexts, collaborative ethnography is increasingly the norm; however, it is debated whether Anthropology is making significant strides to reconcile the power imbalances in ethnographic knowledge production (Lassiter, 2005). Dakota scholar Vine Deloria Jr.'s critique that anthropology endures as a "deeply colonial academic discipline" (1997, p.211) remains relevant, pointing to an ongoing hierarchical relationship between the academy and Indigenous communities that persists despite attempts to engage different voices. As a non-Indigenous person, I wish, as Sarah Ahmed asserts, not to describe Indigenous peoples, but to describe the encounters in which I am faced with them and to not "hold them in place… into a theme, concept or thing" (2000, p.145). Yet I recognize that as a non-Indigenous scholar, my engagement with Indigenous voices is nonetheless a hierarchical process (Ahmed, 2000).

A focus on Indigenous voices is a form of *ethnographic refusal,* or challenging the idea that entire cultures can be known or spoken for (Simpson, 2009). Audra Simpson advocates for segregating culture into a variety of narratives rather than generating a comprehensive "official story" and examining the social contexts that produce narratives (2014, p.97). I am interested in re-appropriating concepts like culture and identity "in ways that lead the reader's gaze back to the social and economic injustices neglected and deflected" (Wong, 2011, p.159). I employ a "post-cultural" approach that involves a direct engagement with and critique of culture as an "ever changing part of how we engage with each other across difference. Something that we do and something that is done to us" (Gatzatambide-Fernandez, 2012). In order to examine Indigenous cultures, one must draw on multiple mediums in which Indigenous peoples create Indigenous knowledge. In the following section, I examine the role of storytelling and art as mediums for challenging colonial structures.

Indigenous art and storytelling

Storytelling and art are important vehicles in production of Indigenous knowledge. Stories and storytelling are nuanced ways of knowing that are produced within relational networks of meaning (Kovack, 2010; 2008, Tuhiwai-Smith, 1999). Anthropological perspectives

on storytelling suggest that stories are adaptive means for talking about and making sense of social change (Kane, 2010; Cruikshank, 2000). Storytelling can also generate opportunities for resistance and change (Beavon, Voyageur and Newhouse, 2011; Hedican, 2008). Sium and Ritskes describe Indigenous storytelling as "decolonization theory in its most natural form" (2013, p.ii). It is a way to ground the material realities of those who have been impacted by and resisted colonialism and a way to recognize their subjectivities as intellectually and politically valid (Sium and Ritskes, 2013, p.iii-iv).Therefore, Indigenous storytelling is inherently political and should be recognized as a form of creative rebellion, beyond liberal notions of storytelling as a "multicultural 'show and tell'" (Sium and Ritskes, p.v).

Within Indigenous storytelling traditions visual art is an important medium to communicate Indigeneity and decolonization. Kanyen'kehaka artist Greg Hill describes Indigenous art as "aesthetic sovereignty" that allows Indigenous peoples to express their perspectives on heritage and ongoing colonization (2013, p.137). The power of Indigenous art to uncover and resist colonial legacies of the child welfare system is exemplified in the art of Plains Cree artist, George Littlechild. Littlechild is a survivor of the Sixties Scoop. He was taken into a foster home at a young age (Littlechild, 2012, p.13). His art examines the oppression of Indigenous peoples and envisions alternatives through painting and mixed media. He often works with photographs of Indigenous peoples he obtained through extensive archival research to comment and reimagine what these images represent. The painting shown on figure 3 was created to communicate and subvert his own family history. He indicates "the statement below this piece says it all. Had Mother not

Mother
Rachel Littlechild, age 18, 1947. Clothed in traditional attire she would have worn had she not attended Indian residential school

Little Child

attended the residential school, she may not have died so tragically and young, and her five children would not have been raised in foster care or adopted" (Littlechild, 2012, p.137). He creates a direct link between the residential school system and the Sixties Scoop, and envisions an alternative history where his family would have remained intact. While both his parents died before he was able to reconnect with them, Littlechild honours them through his art and reclaims his family history.

Indigenous artists play a central role in theorizing and practicing Indigenous resistance through critical creativity. They are "visionaries leading [Indigenous peoples] to a bright future, to mourning the past in productive ways and to sensuously stunning us in the present" (Driskill et al. 2011, p.220). By confronting the impacts of settler colonialism, Indigenous artists create a thriving political and cultural life (Amsterdam, 2013, p.54). Indigenous art reveals and confronts structures of power and fights to realize Indigenous alternatives to settler colonialism (Martineau and Ritskes, 2014, p.iv). Martineau and Ritskes describe Indigenous art as "fugitive Indigeneity", actions "to evade capture, resist cooptation, and renew Indigenous life-ways through the creative negation of reductive colonial demarcations of being and sensing (2013, p.5).

In this project, I employ storytelling as a critical base to examine how Indigenous youth experience and resist ongoing settler colonialism. In the following section, I turn my attention to the logistics of conducting a decolonizing collaborative research approach and explain how this project emerged and continues to grow.

Methods

Recruitment

Planning for this project began long before I officially started my primary fieldwork. I conceived the idea of this project while I was working full time at the mental health agency and was in the process of applying for graduate studies. I received tentative approval from my boss and other senior staff at the research department to conduct an ethnographic project with Indigenous youth at the agency's residential treatment facilities. However, once I was accepted into graduate school and switched to a part-time position in September of 2013, the agency

denied me access to youth in their residential treatment programs. Child welfare was under public scrutiny in Alberta at the time, as the media had recently released the number of children who had died in care. The agency suggested instead, that I focus on youth who were no longer under government custody. In carefully worded statements, they eluded to being concerned that the research would represent the organization negatively and would encourage Indigenous youth to be more critical of the child welfare system than they already were. While I was disappointed that my plans had to change, I was also relieved that the project would not be directly tied to an agency that received a major portion of its funding from child welfare.

In the fall of 2013, I connected with Dr. Rita Henderson, a post-doctoral fellow in the department of Community Health Sciences at the University of Calgary, and a former instructor of mine who was conducting research with marginalized youth. We obtained funding from the Urban Aboriginal Knowledge Network to study the role of housing insecurity in youth's lives. The Urban Society of Aboriginal Youth (USAY) agreed to be an institutional partner for the project. USAY is a small non-profit organization that offers programs and services to youth of ages 14 to 30 in Calgary. USAY is entirely composed of Indigenous staff and have conducted programs with youth to challenge racism and connect youth to a larger Indigenous community. I agreed to take the lead on engaging Indigenous youth to discuss systemic inequality in their lives, including child welfare and homelessness.[25] This also helped me cement a relationship with USAY as community partner for my MA project.

In May of 2014, I began visiting USAY and meeting with Levi First Charger, their Outreach worker and a member of Piikani and Kainai Nations. The initial meetings were friendly, but he seemed hesitant about engaging in the project funded by the Urban Aboriginal Knowledge Network and unsure of exactly what the project would entail. Whenever I would ask him what direction he thought the project would take, he would mention that he just wanted to "make Rita happy" and ensure the project was "a success". First Charger explained to me why he believed the project was valuable indicating the following:

---

[25] Rita Henderson was offered an opportunity to take part in an international research project in the summer of 2014, and therefore was absent during the recruitment and data collection period.

Most of the Aboriginal youth I talk to, they always have something to talk about the Welfare system, mostly negative. I thought, everybody is dealing with this, how come people don't know? It is so well kept secret. When this came up, I thought, this is a chance for people to hear their story and their voice, and hopefully from this project there will be some change. Maybe not right away, but later on. —Levi First Charger, *Outreach staff for the Urban Society for Aboriginal Youth*, Calgary, July 2014.

First Charger later indicated that his earlier hesitation came from the sensitivity of the topic and the potential for the research to harm youth as they spoke about traumatic experiences. After not hearing from First Charger for some time, I received an email saying that his grandmother had died and he would be taking time off. This meant that the project was put on hold until he returned, as I was relying on him to help me build relationships with Indigenous youth who had been in the child welfare system. I began pursuing other avenues and reaching out to Indigenous acquaintances via email, Facebook or at community events looking for those who might be interested in the project. In this way, I made many connections with a wider community of those impacted by the child welfare system who provided important contextual information as well as support for the project.

The recruitment process was slow, but once the project gained momentum more youth emerged who wanted to participate than I had originally anticipated. The first six youth who agreed to be formal collaborators were referred to me by Levi First Charger. He arranged meetings for us to talk about the project face to face. He later indicated to me that these youth were "committed to turning their lives around." Youth who were currently struggling more generally had less contact with USAY and from his perspective, would be less likely to commit to the project. I felt that valuable perspectives would be missed if we did not make a directed effort to approach youth who were currently struggling with homelessness and criminal involvement. Therefore, I expanded the recruitment approach beyond USAY, and recruited fourteen other youth from two local outreach programs that work with homeless youth: Exit Outreach and the Alex Youth Health Centre. Recruiting in these agencies occurred with the help of staff, who identified Indigenous clients[26] who may be interested in taking part. Posters were

---

[26] Youth who are provided services within mental health agencies are referred to within these agencies as clients. These individuals are administered and managed within institutional contexts, but who are also provided "services."

also put up in these agencies and others and a recruitment poster was circulated via email and through the USAY Facebook page to raise awareness about the project (See appendix 1 for promotional poster used).

A total of 20 youth who had been placed in the child welfare system were formally involved in the project. The average age of youth collaborators was 24 years old. Eleven were female, nine were male and one identified as neither male nor female. Of 20 who took part, 15 disclosed experiences with homelessness. Seven were parents, one was expecting, and four of them have had their children taken into custody by the child welfare system. Five disclosed that they identified with a marginalized sexual identity, or as two-spirit, lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans or queer (2SLGBTQ). Selected biographies written by youth collaborators can be found in appendix 2. I also conducted informal interviews with 16 Indigenous and four non-Indigenous stakeholders. Stakeholders included service providers who had worked in child welfare and related systems, Indigenous elders, activists, and family members of youth who had been part of the project. I spoke most often with Levi First Charger from USAY and Heather Henry, the Aboriginal Outreach worker at the Alex Youth Health Centre, who provided me with ongoing background and contextual information, feedback and support throughout the process.

Data collection

Data collection formally began late July 2014 and ended in late September 2014. When youth agreed to participate in the project, they were given a project outline so that they were aware of the themes that I had wanted to explore with the project. The main themes were Identity and Culture, Community, Life History, Place and Displacement, Individual/Family Injustice and Social Justice and Resistance (See appendix 3 for the full outline provided to youth). Youth were paid for their involvement to recognize the value of their time and effort. Youth who were involved in a single discussion were paid $25, youth who were involved for four weeks of discussions and/or creation of art were paid $250 and youth who were involved in eight weeks were paid $500. Youth were provided with artistic supplies if they were interested in creating artistic media. Food paid by the grant money was also part of our gatherings and interviews.

I will divide the discussion of data collection methods into three sections: interviewing, artistic and creative media, and participant observation. While many of the youth were involved in more than one of these forms of data collection, each form played a distinct role and provided complementary information. Interviews were the foundation of this research, as I sought to capture the stories and testimonies in order to develop a better understanding of how they were linked to larger processes. Artistic methods facilitated expression for youth, capturing emotional aspects of their experiences and creating layers of meaning that complemented their narratives. Artistic expression also captivated the interest of many audiences in presentations, exhibits and publications. Through participant observation, I was able to receive insight into youth's experiences in the city and with institutions. Participant observation also created opportunities to meet other Indigenous individuals impacted by the child welfare system and incorporate their perspectives as part of my analysis.

1) Interviewing

Interviewing generated most of the data for this research. Youth could participate in as many interviews as they wanted, time permitting. The number of interviews with individual youth collaborators ranged from one to 11, averaging at 3.75. Youth who were recruited through USAY, participated in more interviews (average 5.7) than those who were recruited through other avenues (average 3.25). This was because youth recruited through USAY joined the project earlier than the rest.

Interviews took place in various settings, primarily in the downtown Calgary area including USAY's office, Olympic Plaza and other parks, restaurants, cafes and fast food places, the Downtown University of Calgary campus, Peter Lougheed hospital, Glenbow Museum, the Alex Youth Health Centre and the Calgary Remand Centre. In one occasion, I visited a youth's home to conduct an interview. I struggled to find places that offered some privacy and were not overtly commercial (e.g., restaurants) or impersonal (e.g., universities or offices). As the fieldwork progressed, I found myself conducting more interviews outside, in public parks and streets, away from the fluorescent lights and purchase focused orientations of many locations.

When I met with the six youth who were recruited through USAY, Levi First Charger participated in the initial discussions. However, due to his busy schedule and another family emergency, he was not able to be present for the interviews that followed. The interviews had very little structure and involved back and forth discussion. I shared my own experiences and perspectives so that youth would understand my position within the research. My point of view was typically well-received among those I spoke to, and helped to build rapport. For some youth, it helped validate their own critiques of the system, which they would not feel comfortable sharing with many people. Youth were given few instructions of what to talk about at the outset, but rather were told to reflect on their lives and how they think Indigenous people are treated in Canada. As the youth began talking, I would usually only interject to validate what they were saying, explore something they had said more deeply, or share my own experiences and perspectives including themes that had come up in other interviews. I would try not to change the subject. Ongoing discussions also included topics such as current events, popular culture, and updates about our lives. A typical interview lasted about one hour, but could be as long as three hours. The majority of interviews with youth were audio recorded. Interviews with Indigenous and non-Indigenous stakeholders were informal and rarely recorded. These were similar to discussions with youth but had a stronger focus on information sharing about the project and discussing the experience of working within dominant systems, such as non-profit agencies, child welfare and education.

2) Artistic and creative media

Out of the 20 youth collaborators, 11 were involved in creating and sharing artistic and creative media. Youth were invited to participate in art making as part of the project from the outset, including photography, video, poetry, dance, music, or any other forms that were of interest to them. Nine of the youth did not partake in this aspect of the project, because they did not consider themselves artistic or did not express interest. For the 11 that participated, the majority of the work was created after they became involved with the project but some also drew from previous work that addressed relevant themes. The creation of art was generally done without my facilitation.

The project outline given to youth provided questions that they could explore through their art. I equipped some of the youth collaborators with supplies when they requested them such as paints, canvases, clay, notebooks, and pencils, and lent to some a professional digital camera that was loaned to me for the project. I accompanied two of the youth collaborators to take photographs in the city and at the Tsuu T'ina Nation Pow wow. One youth created a clay sculpture during one of our discussions. The rest of the youth created the art on their own time.

For many youth, finishing the art or submitting it as part of the project was a challenge. Two youth reported their art lost or stolen before they were able to submit it. Some were unable to focus on finishing their pieces due to competing priorities or struggled as the process of creating art brought up too many difficult emotions. Shalome Hope, a youth collaborator wrote to me, explaining some of the difficulties she encountered when creating art: "I keep thinking of a piece of art I'd like to make... And somewhere along my trail of thought I become confused and realize that I do not know the extent of what has happened to me." Another youth collaborator had made a number of pieces and written extensively while he was incarcerated. However, he told me that he was assaulted by guards in the facility and then told that these guards had "misplaced" his work. In the case of three youth, I never saw any of the final artwork they created.

The final works completed included poetry, drawings, photography, paintings, beading, dance, spoken word, rap, and a life map. Youth appreciated having creative modes of expression that provided them with an ability to interpret their life experiences symbolically through artistic media rather than discussing them and to showcase their artistic talents.

3) Participant observation

Participant observation was a crucial part of this project. I spent much of the time between and during interviews at locations that provided relevant context for this research. Interactions that informed this research took place within Treaty 6 and 7 territories, primarily in Calgary, Alberta but also during brief visits to Siksika, Tsuu T'ina, Morley and Enoch reserves and Edmonton, Alberta. I spent time at the agencies where I was recruiting collaborators, speaking to their staff and clients and observing. I gained valuable insights from speaking with youth in public areas of the city, retail spaces and at the Peter Lougheed mental health ward and

Remand centre. I attended many community events that helped enrich my knowledge base and build relationships. Some of the events I attended in the early stages of my fieldwork included a play about family organized by USAY, the Canada day Pow Wow, street ceremony – a gathering organized by Indigenous activists including free food, singing and drumming, and the Anarchist book fair – which included a presentation from an Indigenous activist from Eastern Canada about child welfare. Once I established a relationship with youth, I was joined by one or more of them at other events including the Morley and Tsuu T'ina Pow Wows, local hip hop gatherings, a spoken word event and Global Fest. Other events that I attended included a Native knowledge exchange at Mount Royal University and the Making Treaty 7 performance at Heritage Park. Finally, I collaborated with an Indigenous artist at a performance art festival, which assisted me in thinking about how issues of colonialism and displacement could be explored and conveyed purely through artistic practices.

Analysis and dissemination

The process of making sense of the experiences and products associated with this research has been iterative and was given life as youth collaborators and I began sharing findings in public venues. This was an important aspect of collaboration, as I wanted youth to be integrated into discussions before the written work was completed as a way to enhance the discussion and obtain their feedback. I had anticipated that advocacy would be a key aspect of this project, particularly if youth and Levi First Charger were interested in sharing their perspectives with public audiences. In this section I focus on describing the presentations and events we were involved with in order to stress how this became central to making sense of the experiences discussed in this thesis and supporting youth in presenting on the issues that affect them in public contexts.

The first presentation took place early September 2014, at the Under Western Skies conference at Mount Royal University. When putting together this presentation for a panel on Indigenous law and policy, I was still pursuing data collection. Rita Henderson, myself, and Tifa Ocampo – one of the youth collaborators – presented to a small audience of students, academics and other community members. The goal of the presentation was to provide a brief outline of the

research and then give one of the youth an opportunity to share their perspectives on how systemic inequality had shaped their experiences. We were introduced as an academic, a graduate student, and an undergraduate. I spoke to the youth after the presentation about this and they laughed, as they had never completed high school and found the idea of post-secondary education to be unattainable. By engaging youth in discussions in environments from which their voices were typically excluded, a different form of knowledge was being brought to the forefront.

This research has been presented at a total of 17 lectures, conferences and gatherings so far to a collective audience of more than 1800 people in Calgary, Edmonton, Prince George, Enoch Nation, and Toronto. Other conferences have included the Treaty 7 Corporation Health gathering, the Urban Aboriginal Knowledge Network Western Regional Research Centre workshop, the Alberta Housing and Homelessness Research Strategy Launch, the Honouring Our Knowledge Gifts Aboriginal Research Forum, the Trauma Informed Care conference and the Eighth Fire Gathering, and the Critical Ethnic Studies Association annual conference. Three guest lectures on the project occurred for courses at the University of Calgary (ANTH 213: Contemporary Aboriginal issues in Canada, ANTH 303: Business in Cultural Context, and INDG 401: Research in selected topics in international Indigenous studies), and one guest lecture at Mount Royal University (NSTS 0130: Native Studies). A presentation was given as part of the department of Anthropology and Archeology Anarky lecture series, and another presentation was given at the Office of the Child and Youth Advocate to their staff group. A community gathering was held in January 2015, to invite youth, their family members and other Indigenous community members to share their stories, artwork, and connect. The art was displayed as an exhibition in five occasions, for the *Critical Ethnic Studies Association* annual conference, the This Is My City arts festival, for the Anarky lecture series, for the Indigenous art seminar and for the

Figure 4. Uncovering Colonial Legacies exhibit opening at This Is My City arts festival, photo by Deloria Many Grey Horses

Honouring Our Knowledge gifts conference. A complete list of venues and presentations can be found in appendix 4.

Youth and Levi First Charger have been invited to present and participate in all of the seventeen events, via Facebook or phone. Facebook has been an effective way to keep in touch with nearly all of the youth collaborators and share information about the outcomes of the project. A total of nine youth participated in fourteen of seventeen presentations. This has been an important aspect of the project for youth who were interested in not only having their stories heard and in audiences seeing their work, but in sharing these first hand. Four youth were involved in presenting more than once and two youth, Tia Ledesma and Tyler Blackface, were involved in nine and eight presentations, respectively. Levi First Charger participated in seven presentations.

We have pursued a variety of approaches for publication of the work. Two videos were published online for the Launch of the Alberta Research Strategy on Homelessness and Honouring Our Knowledge Gifts conference, which have been shared through social media and viewed by hundreds of people. An article about the project, including the artwork of three youth, has been published in New Skool magazine and will have 6,000 copies distributed across Canada. The Metro newspaper published a feature on the project in their newspaper, which publishes nearly 80,000 copies of every issue. Tyler Blackface's art will also be on the cover of an upcoming collaborative research methodology textbook, with an explanation of the research. A short video about the project was featured as a part of the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) Storytellers contest and was shared publicly on SSHRC's YouTube channel. Three media articles about the project were also featured on the University of Calgary website. Links to each publication can be found in appendix 4. A documentary film about the project is being made in partnership with the First Nation Children's Action Research and Education Service, headed by Cindy Blackstock, which is scheduled to be completed in the fall of 2015. We will also pursue publication of at least two academic articles targeting Anthropology, Critical Race Studies, Indigenous Studies, and clinical audiences.

Each of these presentations and publications has added a layer of analysis to the project. Youth have been able to reflect on their narratives and how they would like to convey them to wider audiences. Each presentation pushed us to think about how to best convey the narratives

and artistic expressions created for the project for different audiences and gather feedback. Engagement with theoretical perspectives occurred throughout the project, but was a point of contention for me as I did not want to distance the discussion too far from youth's narratives to academic discourse that had little meaning to them. Upon finishing my data collection, I felt compelled to just share youth's narratives with little explicit connection to academic analysis. However, after I attended the *Researchers and Academics of Colour for Equity* conference on "Unsettling Conversations, Unmaking Racisms and Colonialisms" in Edmonton in October, 2014, my perspective changed. Several Indigenous scholars presented at that meeting, including Glen Coulthard, Audra Simpson, Maria Campbell, and Leanne Simpson. I was inspired by their arguments that related to the experiences of youth who I worked with seamlessly and added a layer of persuasiveness and power to youth narratives. Therefore, I center my academic analysis on relating youth's everyday experiences to academic discourses, primarily from Indigenous scholars in Critical Race and Indigenous studies about ongoing colonialism and oppression. Youth have generally approved how I have incorporated academic research and theory in presentations and have indicated to me that my analysis complements their stories.

Ethics

A central issue within this project was fostering positive and supportive relationships with Indigenous people through community involvement. Working with the Urban Society for Aboriginal Youth and other youth serving agencies was a crucial step in establishing relationships with Indigenous youth. However, while USAY was involved in different ways throughout the process, they did not play a central role in decision making regarding the project or offer much critical input. While the project was visible to many members of Indigenous communities, and incorporated their feedback whenever possible, there was no established structure to ensure accountability to them. When conducting research on reserves, projects must be approved by the band council in order to ensure that they will provide a mutual benefit. Such a process does not exist in Calgary and in many other urban centres. Applied community-based researchers will often only pursue a research question or problem envisioned by community members and establish committees to make decisions throughout the process. This project did

not undergo any formal review process beyond obtaining ethical approval from the University of Calgary Conjoint Faculties Research Ethics Board and decision making occurred through informal discussions with different collaborators. While the project was inspired by my interactions with Indigenous youth, these youth themselves or other Indigenous community members did not ask me to pursue this initiative. It is likely that many of the youth would not have been involved if they were required to commit more formally to all steps of the research process. The flexible nature of the project was beneficial in engaging a greater number of youth from different backgrounds and navigating around their competing priorities and needs. This approach also limited the possibility to ensure that all youth collaborators contributed formally and consistently to decision making about the project over time.

Due to the multiple marginality of youth collaborators, I placed careful consideration when designing the structure of the project into reducing potential discomfort and harm that may occur due to participation in research about their experiences (Fisher et al., 2002). Emotional risks I identified included that youth would feel uncomfortable, anxious or upset discussing their lives and negative experiences they have had. These risks were mitigated by making efforts to establish respectful and open communication regarding the project and its relationship to their own wellbeing. Collaborators included youth who were willing to participate by obtaining informed consent. An informed consent form was read to them and details of the project were explained to ensure understanding of the process. I stressed that their decision to participate was voluntary and they could withdraw at any time, with no adverse consequences. It was not until youth indicated that they wanted to participate, that they were told how much they would be paid. This was done to ensure that compensation was not the primary reason why youth decided to be involved.

Youth were informed that they did not need to delve into topics they were uncomfortable speaking about and could choose to stop interviews or withdraw from the project at any time. Youth were asked during interviews how they were feeling. I also looked for verbal and non-verbal cues during the interview that would suggest that the participant was feeling upset or distressed. This risk was also mitigated by encouraging youth to follow up with community supports (both formal and informal) if they felt upset or anxious. It is important to note, however, that many of the topics that youth talked about were ones that they had had very few

opportunities to discuss and therefore, many of them felt compelled to talk about difficult topics. Some even indicated that the project served as a more affordable, accessible, and relatable alternative to therapy, which brings up some of the shortcomings of existing professional forms of support. For three of the youth collaborators, being part of the project brought painful memories to the surface that they had willingly suppressed. For example, Virginia Red Crow explained some of the difficulties with participating and speaking about her experience in the child welfare system:

> I've never really talked about it like AT ALL. It is something that is just in the closet, deep back in there and I never really confronted it. A lot of compressed emotions and memories just makes it ten times as hard to get it out. I am slowly learning how to deal with them and how to express them. —Virginia Red Crow, *youth collaborator*, Calgary, August 2014.

I offered emotional support to the youth as best as I could, and encouraged their decisions to navigate away from these topics in our conversations and distance themselves from the project if needed.

Social risks included loss of privacy and breaches of confidentiality regarding self-disclosed personal information. Data collected was stored in a secure, password protected computer and in a locked filing cabinet. To minimize the risk of loss of privacy, youth were informed that they had the option of removing any information they did not want to be shared publicly and using a pseudonym. A few youth asked for particular anecdotes or identities to be kept out of the final record, but the majority indicated that they were comfortable sharing their stories and having those stories attributed to them. Youth have seen which quotes of theirs have been used in discussions and have also been involved in the process of presenting research themselves. Therefore, this thesis includes many of the real names of youth who participated as a way to honour and give credit to their knowledge, experiences and efforts. In a few cases, individual names have been left out to protect youth from information that could potentially be used against them, particularly in relation to experiences with violence.

In summary, this research has employed a number of approaches to build relationships and support the generation of knowledge that reflects the experiences of Indigenous youth in child welfare. I collaborated with youth, engaging in interviewing, promoting artistic expression,

and conducting participant observation. The anticolonial, collaborative and artistic approaches were each fundamental for the project to take life and enabled many forms of engagement with public audiences. At the opening of the Uncovering Colonial Legacies art exhibit as part of the This *Is My City festival* youth collaborator Sarah Scout (pictured in figure 5) described how each of these aspects played a role in her participation:

Figure 5. Sarah Scout, youth collaborator, at Uncovering Colonial Legacies exhibit opening for This Is My City arts festival. Photo by Deloria Many Grey Horses

When I was asked if I wanted to be part of this exhibit my immediate response was one of defense and a little fear. However, when it was explained to me that the intent of this exhibit was not inspired to promote child welfare but to "Uncover [its] Colonial Legacies" in my heart I knew there might be room not only for me, but a safe space for my art and voice to join with others who have survived and are surviving "child welfare (dis)Placement." — Sarah Scout, *youth collaborator*, Calgary, April 2015.

Sarah explains how she was hesitant to participate until she found out that the purpose of the project was to support critical Indigenous youth voices. She references the title in particular, which she later indicated to me, struck a very important chord with her through its framing of child welfare as a form of displacement linked to ongoing colonialism. This was a theme that guided many discussions with youth and enabled critical discourses to emerge that are not often visible or encouraged. In the following chapter I discuss how youth narratives reflect the treatment of Indigenous children as Terra Nullius or empty land, assimilation, ongoing displacement and policing and state-sanctioned violence and violent indifference. I provide an analysis of how youth's experiences and perspectives illuminate central aspects of settler colonialism, particularly in relation to the child welfare system.

CHAPTER 2. SETTLER COLONIALISM

I was in a counselling room at the Alex Youth Health Centre interviewing Melody Berland, a young Indigenous woman. She sat across from me wearing sunglasses that protected her bruised and bloodshot eye from the fluorescent lights. As we were coming to the one hour mark of the interview, someone knocked on the door. "Your sister passed away. You got a voicemail." Berland walked out of the room and rushed toward the stairwell. Two program staff followed behind and tried to console her as she sobbed loudly. I stood in the back and watched as she desperately dialed, trying to reach her family members. Once I had a chance, I asked "is there anything I can do?" She cried "can you pay me so I can go buy some fucking smokes?!!"

Before the interview was interrupted, Berland recounted numerous experiences involving her family members and loved ones with domestic violence, addictions, police violence, and abuse. More than a handful of them resulted in death. She spoke about her sister in the interview, who had struggled with drug addiction for a long time and had previously overdosed. "She overdosed on meth a couple months back and she died for two minutes. Whoever she was with, put a blanket on her and threw her outside" (Calgary, September 2014). Her fears of her sister succumbing to an early death had materialized and the difficult realities we discussed in the interview took life in a way that neither of us expected.

I met Berland at the Alex Youth Health Centre's drop-in program, where I was given permission to speak to clients about the project and seeing if they were interested in participating. It was a quiet afternoon and less than a handful of clients had walked through the doors. Then, two young women came in, one with a large purple bruise around her blood red eye was Berland. They spoke to a worker and then sat at the table in the common area. I approached Heather Henry, the Aboriginal Support Worker and asked, "Have any clients come in who you think would like to talk to me?" Henry referred me to Berland and introduced us, mentioning that I was doing important research. We both proceeded to a counselling room and I explained the research to her and the consent form. She agreed to participate saying "sure, it is not like it is going to be used against me." She put sunglasses on and we proceeded with the interview.

Berland began explaining her mother's experience with poverty, domestic violence, addictions, and criminal justice involvement and how it led to her being "scooped" by child

welfare at the age of 13. She weaved an analysis of child welfare in her explanation of the system: "It is kinda like the residential school type shit, they take you away from what you know and you are there to fend for yourself." In her case, it was history repeating itself as she became an addict, was in and out of jail and then lost custody of her child. Her direct and frank nature and poignant critique of these systems was similar to many of the youth I spoke with, particularly those who had been homeless. I had been worried that her physical state and the experience that had caused it would have made it difficult to talk about topics such as violence, but this did not seem to be the case. She talked at length about her mother's untimely death and the way it had impacted her. She also explained: "I am in an abusive relationship, as you can see. It becomes a cycle and I am sick of it. Every guy I have ever dated has always beat the shit out of me." She also shared with me her journey to try to reclaim her life and move forward despite the trauma, guilt, shame and feelings of inferiority that she had acquired throughout her life. "I love myself. I am beautiful. I didn't always feel that way."

The encounter narrated above is a preface to contextualize the discussion in this chapter and to outline the complexity behind the institutional, social and emotional components of this project. While interactions with the youth varied, this story embodies many of the themes that I will address. Specifically, in this chapter I discern how Indigenous youth's everyday experiences relate to ongoing systemic inequality. I argue that their experiences in the child welfare system are part of larger historical processes to facilitate dispossession of land and resources, assimilation of Indigenous peoples and violence and violent indifference primarily toward Indigenous women and children. Similar to residential schools and the reserve system, child welfare embodies institutionalized assimilation and disempowerment through displacement. Through experiences with sexual and physical violence youth are treated as disposable and experience exploitation at the hands of those with more power.

Indigenous children as Terra Nullius

> *As soon as the baby was born the social worker took him from my mom. They passed my little brother to the foster parents and they took him like he was theirs. She knew they were gonna take him. It was sickening. She named him Justice for that reason, she has*

always wanted justice. They changed his name to Jacob. He doesn't know his name is Justice. —Angela Gladue, *youth collaborator*, Calgary, July 2014.

All of the youth I spoke to have related the injustice behind being uprooted from their families and communities and distanced from everything that they have known. Angela Gladue's narrative quoted above particularly highlights the way Indigenous children are treated as Terra Nullius, or land that is open for the taking. Their bodies become sites of conquest that the state claims as its property in order to retain control over Indigenous communities and limit their political power. Erin Marie Konsmo, Métis artist, examines in her painting *Our Bodies Are Not Terra Nullius* (figure 6) how reproductive justice is impacted by colonialism. Indigenous women's autonomy over their own bodies and their right to parent their children are limited due to competing state and corporate interests, which are represented in the artwork as the parliament and the oil extraction industry. Gladue and Konsmo both provide powerful analyses, with Gladue expressing how the conquest of bodies occurs and Konsmo inscribing the corporate and colonial state on the body and reproductive organs of an Indigenous woman in her art.

Figure 6. "Our Bodies Are Not Terra Nullius" by Erin Marie Konsmo

In Gladue's account and many others, children are taken from their mothers at the hospital soon after birth. Children may also be taken later in life if their families are reported to child welfare by neighbors, police officers, or teachers. Children are often apprehended at schools and other public settings. In some cases, parents are not present or aware that their child is being taken, which was typical during the Sixties Scoop. For example, one youth collaborator told me that he was lured into a van by a social worker who told him he would take him to play soccer while his mom was at work. Youth describe these experiences as painful and traumatic as they did not know why they were taken, where they were going, or how long they would be away. Their testimonies emphasize experiences of being "scooped", taken often without warning under false pretenses and experiencing a form of kidnapping by the state. These testimonies challenge Glen Coulthard's assertion that "in the Canadian context, colonial relations of power are no longer reproduced primarily through coercive means but rather through the asymmetrical exchange of mediated forms of state recognition and accommodation" (2014, p.15). While negotiations and agreements may be occurring at a higher political level, Indigenous children taken by child welfare through coercion and force and their families are excluded from these political processes.

Indigenous mothers are targeted through state interventions, such as removal of children from their homes, due to an underlying belief that they are inferior and need help (Jacobs, 2005; Williams et al., 2001; Kline, 1993). I heard stories of mothers being *red flagged* by the system due to family history of child welfare involvement, a criminal record or simply because they are Indigenous and thus perceived as "high risk". Many of the parents of youth who participated in this project had been placed in residential schools and foster care themselves, and therefore are deemed unfit to be parents due to the trauma they endured in these experiences. Gladue described to me her mother's experiences with the child welfare:

> My mom got all her kids taken away. So she did everything that the social worker told her to do. You have to take parenting classes, you have to be sober, you have to go to AA meetings and you have to volunteer. You know, be like a super saint, to get her kids back. And she fucking did it, she kicked ass and she did all of those things. They just made it super impossible for her. "No, it is not good enough, now you have to do this". She fought for years, she was trying to be an angel for years. She did amazing for herself and

then it just broke her down so much that she just gave up again. —Angela Gladue, *youth collaborator*, Calgary, July 2014.

There are important religious themes of salvation and indoctrination in Gladue's story, as the child, whose name was Justice, was given a biblical name, Jacob, and the only way her mother could regain custody of her children was by becoming an angel or a saint. Since the latter was unattainable her mother was perceived within the child welfare system as irreparably damaged leading her to give up and stop fighting for custody of her children. Gayatri Spivak writes about how colonial powers often focus on specific demographics of the other that need to be "saved", particularly women and children (1988). Within the system of settler colonialism the focus on mothering, to which Jacobs refers to as maternal colonialism, renders Indigenous children as projects of the state (2005). Taking children from a young age has been a key tactic of institutions that perpetuate marginalization of racialized groups. Under the guise of helping and evangelizing communities, colonial structures have effectively subjugated them. Similar to modern slavery and the residential school system, severing family ties has been instrumental in creating a docile and obedient generation subordinated to dominant structures (Dunaway, 2003; Milloy, 1999). In residential schools, children were often punished for speaking to their siblings, which is another theme that emerged in Gladue's narrative and others:

> I was about 14 and I was like 'hey, I wanna contact my brothers and sisters, I heard that they lived two towns away from me.' And I remember getting the phone number from a social worker and when I called, the foster parents told me "stop calling here cause you are gonna ruin their livessss!!" Finally I was able to visit them, but I didn't see them again until Christmas time a few years ago. It has to be supervised. I can't hang out with them without foster parents there. Even though I work with kids and I don't have a criminal record. —Angela Gladue, *youth collaborator*, Calgary, July 2014.

Gladue, who now works with children and youth when delivering dance and cultural workshops in schools and correctional facilities was denied access to her brothers and sisters in the child welfare system and continues to have limited access to them. Like many other youth collaborators, she was treated as a contaminating influence for her siblings who are seen as they could still be potentially saved by the child welfare system. As Indigenous youth grow older and become parents they are subjected to the same scrutiny by the child welfare system. Of the seven

parents that I worked with, four had their own children taken into custody. Parents have been deemed unfit by the child welfare system, even though the reasons they are seen as unfit stem from the trauma that they have faced in their own lives through growing up in the system. This perpetuates a cycle of children being disconnected from their families that began with residential schools. Shalome Hope described how being in the system has impacted her own experiences with motherhood and created barriers that are difficult and sometimes impossible to overcome:

> Child welfare symbolizes incapability and dysfunction. Seeing my upbringing as that is a devastating reality that has cycled into my own parenting. Despite every attempt and full blown refusal to discontinue the cycle of displaced babies, my family is broken and separated. I never learned what I needed to, to stop the cycle. Not in time to save my child. I do not know the extent of what has happened to me. The effects of colonization are so deeply rooted in my ancestry that I can't tell the difference. —Shalome Hope, *youth collaborator,* Facebook, November 2014.

Her narratives bring forth a troubling cycle of child apprehension within Indigenous communities throughout multiple generations, where children are excised from family environments, often by questionable means. Children are treated as potential blank slates and severing their ties to their home community serves as a chance for a new identity and a new life. In the following section I examine how placement in child welfare thus operates as a vehicle for assimilation and perpetuates marginalization.

"Red skins, white masks"

Since the late nineteenth century, child welfare has been deemed an effective mechanism to "erase the effects of wrong culture and nurture" through intervening in the care of children (McGillivray, 1995). Foucault critiqued the development of child welfare, referring to it as a form of coercive individualization, where the family became "the privileged locus of emergence for the disciplinary question of the normal and abnormal" mandating the removal of children from families that were deemed "abnormal" (Foucault, 1979, pp.215-6). McGillivray compliments Foucault's arguments by adding that for Indigenous communities, child welfare

becomes a normalizing institutional regime effectively fragmenting and erasing aspects of culture (McGillivray, 1995).

An instrumental aspect of "normalizing" children involves moving them from reserves to cities, to non-Indigenous households and to communities where Indigenous people are the minority. Youth collaborators related their frustrations to me about feeling trapped in environments where they were distanced from their culture, family and traditions. Some of them referred to their experiences as being "whitewashed" or "growing up white". Tyler Blackface explained to me that his painting (figure 7) shows how he felt his true identity was trapped and suppressed by the child welfare system. He created this painting during the time of my fieldwork to examine his experience being taken from Siksika to be raised by white foster parents in a predominantly white neighborhood in the city. He wrote the following description to explain the artistic choices he made and their relationship to his personal experiences:

> This one represents my feelings while growing up in care. The red, black and yellow are colours from the medicine wheel. The white is supposed to represent a cage and how I felt that I couldn't be who I truly am while growing up 'white' The gold is to represent the illusion of life being "golden" when I was facing numerous problems that I couldn't deal with at that time. —Tyler Blackface, *youth collaborator*, October 2014.

Figure 7. "Four Directions" by Tyler Blackface, youth collaborator

Blackface uses the colours of the medicine wheel behind a white cage to represent the way his identity was suppressed, leading him to grow up conflicted, confused and without access to his culture and traditions. He chooses these colours as the backdrop to illustrate that his Indigenous identity did not disappear while he was in care, but rather that it was subject to control and regulation. Youth's narratives emphasized how they are being disconnected from their families, languages, cultures, and traditions stressing some of the similarities between the child welfare system and the residential school system as systems that promote assimilation. Franz Fanon points out that processes of forced "civilization" are most effective when one is surrounded by the dominant group (1968, p.74). His assertion that "the white family is the workshop in which one is shaped and trained for life in society" (Fanon, 1967, p.149) bears particular relevance in the context of Blackface's experience. The process of "whitewashing" that Blackface describes occurs at the expense of the "death and burial of [his] local cultural originality" (Fanon, 1967, p.18).

Glen Coulthard provides a useful analysis to how colonialism impacts the identity formation of Indigenous youth (2014). Coulthard relates the phenomenological work of Franz Fanon to the experience of Indigenous peoples in Canada. Fanon asserts that colonial rule is not solely perpetuated by force alone, but requires the conditioning and participation of "colonized subjects" in the hegemony of the settler state (1991, p.217). Coulthard points out Fanon's assertion that colonized subjectivity is characterized by thoughts, desires and behaviors that implicitly or explicitly support the continued domination of colonial subjects (2014, pp.16-17). My data demonstrates that this form of assimilation into dominant political structures is promoted by the child welfare system.

Many youth were told by professionals that their parents did not want to take care of them or visit them and were not trying to improve their lives in order to get them back. These messages intend to sever ties between family members and have dire consequences for youth. Aldin Crowchild, one of the youth collaborators, was taken into custody along with his siblings and moved to Calgary. Crowchild was made to think that his family abandoned him which made him feel inadequate. These events influenced his outlook on life:

Thinking 'why should I care if they don't care?' When I turned 9 and we went through the system back and forth to different foster cares, no people could handle us, me, my twin and my older brother. We were kind of wild because we didn't have family, we didn't have that mother, didn't have that dad. We didn't have anybody. I never grew up with Natives, I grew up with white people. —Aldin Crowchild, *youth collaborator*, Calgary, August 2014.

Crowchild was reunited with many of his relatives only at his mother's funeral, which served as a reminder to him of the family he had lost since entering the child welfare system.

Some youth also testified that being in care gave them a chance to believe that they could fit into settler society. As Blackface explained through his painting, youth are tempted to ignore the negative effects of being in the child welfare system as a matter of survival. After being kicked out of different (dis)placements for being deemed to be too difficult to handle, Aldin Crowchild and two of his brothers found a placement with a foster mother. He explains how he felt loved and cared for and built a relationship with his foster mother: "I built that trust with her because she started like actually caring and being a mom. Not to be mean, but I was whitewashed. I was so happy to be because I was polite, honest. I was healthy" (Calgary, July 2014).

For many youth, growing up in foster care enabled them to have access to material benefits that would be otherwise difficult to obtain such as having their own room, eating foods rich in nutritional value and also adopt white culture to fit in. Youth also mentioned how being whitewashed or westernized had helped them adopt "positive" values, through beliefs in Christianity and the protestant work ethic. However, having access to these "more civilized" environments and attempting to fit in, did not mean that they could escape from being seen as inferior and not to be trusted. Crowchild felt that his foster mother provided him with care, but regardless he believed he was still treated as second class and judged for being a "bad kid". He attested to constantly feeling that his foster mother favored her own children and had implicit biases against him and his brothers because they were Indigenous:

We always came second, we never came equal. She would take her kids over what we said:
        -You stole this money! You are grounded for a couple of weeks! Oh you are a bad kid, oh you are just smashing stuff.

-I don't steal. I don't smash. It is not me, it is the other kids. But you take their word and blame us.
-'You are Native', basically, 'you smashed that' All that 'my kids are better than you. My kids come first, you get the hand me downs!'
It is a system, not a family, you just get the leftovers. When you feel cheap you start feeling you are cheap. —Aldin Crowchild, *youth collaborator*, August 2014.

Crowchild's testimony echoes what Fanon describes as a "devaluation of self" that is made possible in a "society that proclaims superiority of one race; to the identical degree that society creates difficulties for him" (1967, p.100). The placement of youth in child welfare creates a partial subject that can access certain privileges by emulating white values, but is nonetheless kept in their place. Homi Bhabha describes this process as *colonial mimicry* or "the desire for a reformed, recognizable Other, as a subject of difference that is almost the same, but not quite" (1984, p.126).

Many youth explained that because they grew up in predominantly white neighborhoods and schools outside of the reserve and were therefore bullied and harassed by children and adults for being Indigenous. This kind of harassment continues into adulthood, as youth face discrimination in the workplace and on the street, dealing with negative stereotypes that complicate their relationship with their cultural and racial identity. Charles Taylor argues that asymmetrical power relations result in the "imprisoning" of one's sense of self, as individuals are reduced to a demeaning or contemptible picture of themselves (1994, pp.25-26). A few youth I spoke to mentioned how they wanted to distance themselves from their racial identity due to its negative associations and to avoid discrimination. Indigenous youth are treated as "triple persons" who are judged against dominant perceptions of their bodies, their race and their ancestors (Fanon, 1967, p.112). Michee explains:

I honestly don't like being Native. People stare at me, people judge me. They say 'I'm so sick of seeing Natives downtown'. I'm surviving day to day, but at least I'm still trying to work, trying to make a difference. I'm not sitting around drinking mouthwash, and I get treated like I do. If people didn't treat me the way they did because of my skin colour, then I wouldn't mind being Native. I wouldn't mind learning my culture and everything. I lost my identity. But this is what I have to do to survive. —Michee, *youth collaborator*, Calgary, September 2014.

But when youth who grew up in the city try to reconnect with Indigenous communities later in life, a cultural divide between them and their home communities emerges which makes it difficult to maintain connections to reserves. Crowchild told me:

> The culture is losing. My reserve, Tsuu T'ina, Sarcee, the Grey Eagle Casino, just go over there and go make me some money! (laughs) Just kidding. The language is Dene, it is a real hard language, they are losing it. The city feels like it is being built over and under the reserve. We all voted for the Ring Road to not go through but then the youth voted and the Ring Road went through. The elders don't want it, the older people don't want it. The effects of moving the graves, the old burial sites. But other people want it because they can make money off it. If they keep on taking our land, we are gonna lose our rights, we are gonna lose everything. But I don't know what is going on on the Rez, I don't go there. I am trying to get away from the negativity cause there is a lot of broken paths. They are dwelling on the past. You gotta change it, you gotta move forward. But it is hard for people to do that. —Aldin Crowchild, *youth collaborator*, Calgary, August 2014.

Crowchild's testimony illustrates how involvement in child welfare contributes to the continued dispossession of land and resources from Indigenous communities. Crowchild refers to the Ring Road agreement, where land was ceded by the Tsuu T'ina nation to the City of Calgary to build a major road that would cut through the reserve. He indicates that compensation for ceding the land represents an opportunity for profit. However, many community members, particularly elders are concerned about the consequences of having the city "built over and under the reserve". The Tsuu T'ina reserve is located within Calgary city limits, but represents a different cultural and political space that Crowchild no longer sees himself fitting into after being moved to out of the reserve by child welfare. Crowchild alternates between referring to the Tsuu T'ina as "we" or "they". While he recognizes the ongoing effects of colonialism in his community, he also expresses a conflicting desire to distance himself from the trauma and negativity he associates with the reserve.

Youth collaborator Sarah Scout reflected on the role of child welfare (dis)placements to urban centres as part of a "final frontier" of colonialism by eroding the connection that Indigenous people have to reserve lands. She told me:

> The older I get and the more I look back I see that taking Native kids from their established homes and families ON reserves and shipping them off to foster homes in the cities is part of the aggressive assimilation policies that ensures First Nations child

physical removal OFF the land - the last land we have, our reserves. The less Ndn's on the land; the more room for the oil companies, settlers and others to move in and exploit it to their means. —Sarah Scout, *Youth collaborator*, Facebook, May 2015, original emphasis.

Duncan Campbell Scott, the original architect of the Canadian residential school system, described the purpose of assimilationist policies when he asserted: "I want to get rid of the Indian problem…That has been the whole purpose of Indian education and advancement since the earliest times… 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 (Miller, 1989, p.207). Youth are encouraged to renounce their indigeneity with the promise of a better life in white society, are distanced from their connections to their families and reserves and are taught to internalize their own inferiority. This contributes to the expansion of projects to gain control of Indigenous resources.

Displacement, policing and state control

In his essay "Space, knowledge and power", Michel Foucault asserted that segregation and control has been justified through a *Bourgeois order* of self-control and self-discipline and one's mastery over their body. Therefore, those who cross the "frontier of Bourgeois order" are spatially separated and carefully monitored (Foucault, 1988, p.131.) In his analysis of prisons and asylums, he describes the physical segregation and close control of marginalized populations as a key aspect of the liberal state. This phenomena of being forcibly separated because one is deemed transgressive is evident in the narratives of Indigenous youth who are institutionalized and subject to close monitoring and policing throughout their lives particularly through child welfare, homelessness services and criminal justice.

A key means for asserting institutional control is displacement. The youth that I worked with shared the experience of being moved around from place to place from a young age through child welfare and having to adapt to new and often undesirable environments. Experiences being forcibly moved render them powerless and at the mercy of institutions. Furthermore, institutions often move youth from place to place and exert control over their lives by pathologizing and criminalizing their behaviours and labeling them as inherently unstable (Le Francois, 2013,

Jeffrey, 2009; O'Neil, Reading and Leader, 1998; Kirby, 1996, p.44). Le Francois refers to the psychiatrization of Indigenous children as a form of "psychiatric violence (Jeffrey, 2009). The effects of this violence have echoed in the testimonies of many youth collaborators. Randy Demas summarized it in his reflection on his life in care:

> I was a severe problem child. No family wanted me because of my track record and behaviors. Schools didn't want me because I was higher needs. They told me it was just going to be an interview with the child psychiatrist, to tell her my life story. She said 'we might have to keep you here for a while. You can't leave'. I tried to run away, but the psychiatrist sent these two male nurses out and they grabbed me. I only made it like a quarter of a way across the parking lot. They put me in the time out room. You sit in there until you agree to behave and cooperate. Guess what I did? I bit one of the nurses and they sedated me. That's when they started me on a whack load of pills. If they were trying to help me back then, that wasn't helping me. That was making matters worse. — Randy Demas, *youth collaborator*, Calgary, August 2014.

Other youth collaborators have had similar experiences being placed in locked mental health wards and detention centres because they were deemed difficult or there was nowhere else to put them.[27] Angela Gladue for example, explains "You get sent to this detention centre. That was my first placement. It is like high security too! I didn't do anything wrong, I wasn't doing crime. I was a ward of the government after that" (Calgary, July 2014). These restrictive environments do little to recreate a functional family setting, making youth distrustful of state systems. Youth also often claimed they felt duped, as information about them or their loved ones was used against them to keep them apart. By failing to comply with placement policies and running away youth can become caught in a cat and mouse game between them and institutions where child welfare and criminal justice run parallel. For some collaborators, defying state institutions led to incarceration and a criminal record. Melody Berland explained how she ended up in jail for running away from care, which signified a breach in her probation agreement:

> They always put me on probation and that is just up for failure. You run away, you are a teenager, you are not gonna abide by the law. Every time you breach probation you get 30 days in jail. I just didn't really care, I just said "fuck the police, no one is gonna tell

---

[27] Recent media reporting has also brought up the use of hotels as child welfare placements (e.g., Globe and Mail, 2015). Gladue expressed concern about this practice in our discussion of inadequate placements for children and youth. None of the youth spoke of having experienced being placed in hotels, and more commonly experienced restrictive placements where they were under constant supervision.

me what to do". I've spent my whole life in jail. —Melody Berland, *youth collaborator*, Calgary, September 2014.

Child welfare serves as a form of housing insecurity that at times is indistinguishable for youth from homelessness characterized by constant moves, running away and feelings of lack of safety and stability. As youth collaborators transitioned into adulthood, many struggle with employment and education and as a result have found themselves in poverty and homelessness. Fifteen out of 20 youth collaborators shared experiences with being homeless. Child welfare perpetuates another cycle of homelessness as youth become adults. This is another aspect of displacement where youth are subjects to institutional control through shelter policies and the policing of how they can use public spaces. As homeless people, they are considered illegitimate citizens or "outside of the realm of the public" and are therefore denied space and experience multiple forms of eviction (Kawash, 1998, p.323). Foucault argues that evictions are justified as a form of moral regulation, seeking to encourage virtuous behavior through punishment (Foucault, 1988, p.131). This is exactly the case for evictions from shelters and drop-in programs. For example, at Exit Outreach drop-in program, youth may be kicked out of the premises for using foul language. Randy Demas explained how many shelters restrict usage to those who engage in substance use in the premises, engage in any form of sexual behaviour or acts of violence. Therefore, policies often serve as another form of behavioral policing that renders many people undesirable in different settings:

> Some people I've met are kicked out of every shelter in the city, and they have no choice but to sleep outside. I used to work down on what we called The Block. It's not around anymore because the cops scared us all out of there because the neighborhood was complaining about us. Now [the Beltline] is cleaned up. They're doing that right now in the East Village. I don't think people who are paying millions of dollars to live in there are going to want homeless people around. —Randy Demas, *youth collaborator*, Calgary, August 2014.

Demas also demonstrates how policing serves the purpose of gentrification. His testimony highlights how it is made increasingly clear to him and other Indigenous people that they do not belong in the city or on the streets and should remain invisible. Over the course of this project I witnessed firsthand the ongoing surveillance and scrutiny over which spaces youth may or may not occupy. Three of the youth I was meeting with were incarcerated over the

course of a few months upon beginning my fieldwork. [28] As I spent time with the youth in the downtown area I also witnessed them being refused service at restaurants, stared at by people in the streets and be accused of shoplifting in stores. I watched youth be approached and intimidated by police officers for spending time on the streets of downtown or utilizing public parks and transit. Angela Davis has provided powerful arguments for understanding the racial dynamics of surveillance and criminalization in the United States that bear important relevance for Canadian contexts. Davis argues that systems of surveillance target the racialized poor and replicate the power relations inherent in enslavement to produce a subjugated criminal class largely composed of African-Americans (2011). Through imprisonment, difference and inequality are enforced under the guise of rehabilitation and ensuring the safety of the wider public. Through what has been named the *school-to-prison pipeline*, racialized youth are set up for failure from a young age though underfunded education and being overdisciplined (Kim. Losen and Hewitt, 2010). Similarly, we see that for Indigenous youth in Canada a child welfare to prison and homelessness pipeline is present. Erin Marie Konsmo explains some of the connections between colonialism and systems of policing and control in Canada, in her painting *On policing* (figure 8). Historically, colonial rule has enforced institutionalized displacement and subjugation of Indigenous peoples.

Figure 8. "On Policing" by Erin Marie Konsmo

---

[28] Imprisonment also serves as a mechanism to distance youth from their communities. This can be exhibited through restrictions placed with communication and involvement in the outside world and also through physical relocation. In April 2015, the government of Alberta announced that the Calgary Young Offenders Centre as well as a centre in Northern Alberta would be closing. In lieu, all youth convicted in Alberta, the majority of them Indigenous, would be sent to Edmonton to serve their sentence.

Marginalization has been facilitated by the police and residential schools thus effectively creating a criminal class of Indigenous peoples. Anne McGillivray utilized Michel Foucault's concept of the carceral archipelago to describe reserves, residential schools, child welfare, correctional facilities, and jail (1995). Each of these institutions serves to manage Indigenous populations perpetuating a cycle under a guise of rehabilitation, "education and protection were seen as remedies in subsequent generations for inadequacies of the former" (McGillivray, 1995: p.v).

"Savage states"

> *Once upon a time there was a child who was wilful and would not do what her mother wished. For this reason, God had no pleasure in her, and let her become ill. No doctor could do her any good, and in a short time the child lay on her deathbed. When she had been lowered into her grave, and the earth was spread over her, all at once her little arm came out again and reached upward. And when they had pushed it back in the ground and spread fresh earth over it, it was all to no purpose, for the arm always came out again. Then the mother herself was obliged to go to the grave and strike the arm with a rod. When she had done that, the arm was drawn in, and at last the child had to rest beneath the ground. And everything went back to normal*—Jacob and Willhelm Grimm "The Willful Child", Grimm's Household tales: with the author's notes (Vol. 2). G. Bell. (1884). p.125.

This passage is an old tale written by the brothers Grimm which describes a *willful child*, a child who is punished for her disobedience by God and her mother. This tale teaches parents and children about the use of violence to discipline children. According to Maria Campbell, this tale has particular significance to Indigenous peoples in Canada, as it was taught at some residential schools to encourage obedience and justify abuse.[29] I use this German tale to introduce a discussion of how state sanctioned violence and the trauma it has produced become instrumental to the marginalization and annihilation of Indigenous peoples. This story captures the mentality that perpetuates violence against young people that is deemed inevitable. These

---

[29]Métis scholar Maria Campbell commented about the use of this story during a discussion period for the 2014 *Researchers and Academics of Colour for Equity* conference: Unsettling Conversations, Unmaking Racisms and Colonialisms, held in Edmonton on October 17th, 2014.

formational experiences with violence also continue into adulthood to keep Indigenous people in their place.

Violence is not merely a metaphor for marginalization, as Bourdieu (1991), Farmer (1996) and other scholars have argued in their work on systemic and structural violence. It takes shape of tangible acts seeking to wear down and destroy Indigenous bodies. Experiences of violence were ubiquitous in youth collaborator narratives, leaving me with a highly disturbing conundrum of whose experiences with violence were most effective or powerful to include. I heard countless stories of Indigenous women being harassed, beaten, and raped by police, stories of children being abused by parents, foster parents and staff who were supposed to care for them, and finally many stories of death by suicide or murder. Youth collaborators and secondary participants were grieving the deaths of more than half a dozen Indigenous young people during the three months of my fieldwork. It is my hope that the discussion in this section in which I analyze and contextualize these systemic experiences with colonial violence that received little public acknowledgement will help honour all of the individuals who have been needlessly hurt or died.

Testimonies of youth collaborators demonstrate that the child welfare system reinforces the heteropatriarchal state, as Indigenous youth (particularly women and sexual minorities) are vulnerable to violence while they are in the system and then later on in life. I will begin by discussing some of Tia Ledesma's experiences with trauma and violence. Her testimony echoed many others who witnessed and experienced abuse within child welfare as part of a punishment and reward system:

> It's so polar, the way I grew up on the Rez to living in a foster home. We had to sit upright, no elbows on the table. It kind of breaks your spirit going from wild kids to being punished for laughing. I guess that was her ways of raising us proper. But for me, it messed me up. It was so hard to laugh again. She used to beat up one of my foster brothers. I didn't trust her. When she hugged me, I flinched, and I just felt grossed out. Eventually I thought, it must have been about the money, why she chose to have foster kids. —Tia Ledesma, *youth collaborator*, Calgary, August 2014.

In this testimony, she describes the foster home where she was placed for several years as breaking her spirit through the enforcement of rules and through witnessing physical abuse in the home. She also brings up the issue of financial compensation to her foster family for providing

57

care for them. Other youth have developed similar arguments to refer to foster care, group homes, residential treatment and criminal justice. Each of these systems is embedded in the corporate state, creating revenue and providing employment (Parker, 1980). Therefore, Indigenous youth often provided first-hand examples of how they are dehumanized within these systems and made into sources of profit. While experiences with trauma and abuse were most frequent at the time youth were in care of child welfare, some youth explained how these experiences carried on through to adulthood. Ledesma explains that her experiences with violence continued once she aged out of care having nowhere to go, and entered a relationship that became abusive and gave birth to her two children:

> I got a boyfriend. I was living with him because I had nowhere else to stay. Then I got pregnant and dropped out of high school. My kids' dad turned out to be very abusive, so I couldn't talk to anybody. I couldn't go anywhere. I couldn't find anywhere safe to be. When my son [her second child] was born, I made a decision that I wasn't going to stay with his dad. I took me and my kids and we went into a shelter. They were helping me with money to get a place. But when their dad wanted to see his kids, I took him back. They said that if I wanted to be with him, I had to give all the money back. They were going to charge me with fraud. —Tia Ledesma, *youth collaborator*, Calgary, August 2014.

Ledesma's testimony conveys gendered violence against young Indigenous women within the context of romantic relationships. She illustrates how upon leaving care, economic vulnerability, housing insecurity and having children prevented her from leaving an abusive relationship. It became Ledesma's responsibility to flee to ensure safety for herself and her children, while her partner was allowed to remain in the home. This testimony also highlights how institutions reinforce marginalization of women through victim-blaming. In reference to Indigenous peoples in Coast Salish territories, Bruce Miller provides a similar assertion claiming that "female victims of violence… must give up their own rights to security in favor of collective rights that favor the offender" (2001, p.52)

Ledesma was denied institutional support when she decides to allow the father of her children back into her home. I had the opportunity to discuss gendered violence with Kainai elder Casey Eagle Speaker, who witnessed similar patterns throughout his life. He told me in November 2014 that institutional policies unfairly place individual responsibility on Indigenous women for their safety and serve to vilify Indigenous men as inherently violent and incapable of

being held accountable for their actions. He contrasted this with traditional conflict resolution techniques that were present in his community before colonization, where men would leave the home and would be able to return once they had paid their dues to the community and to elders.

Sexual violence and exploitation are common experiences, particularly for homeless Indigenous women and two spirit people, who are simultaneously seen as desired and disposable. A two-spirit youth explained how he experienced sexual and physical abuse from a young age:

> It was foster care that got me sexually molested as a child and that's the thing I dwell on most. And the fact that no one listened to me when I tried to come forward about it. It happened daily. He tried to smother me one night too. That was one of the most traumatizing nights. Some days I feel like it's going to happen to me again, like someone's gonna attack me. — Anonymous, *youth collaborator*, Calgary, August 2014.

Upon aging out of care, the individual quoted above became homeless and involved in sex work, which he cites as an extension of the sexual violence he faced earlier in life:

> I started working the street corner. Then I got into doing the internet. I got depressed from doing it. It started reminding me of what happened to me as a child. Mentally it was killing me more. There are days I walk down the street and people follow me. Older men target us Aboriginal men, especially ones on the street because they know we're desperate. A few weeks ago I got in a truck with a random guy and he was being really aggressive with me. He wouldn't let me out of the truck. He wanted to sell me to these guys for five thousand dollars into some kind of slavery. — Anonymous, *youth collaborator*, Calgary, August 2014.

Indigenous youth are also targeted by profiling and violence at the hands of police. Numerous youth I spoke to recounted cases of being assaulted by police, such as this one by an Indigenous woman (who I prefer, remain anonymous):

> When I was eighteen and was living in the hood, we went to the store and the cops were going there because somebody robbed it. They said we fit the description and started beating us up. I spit my blood into the cops face because they beat the shit out of me. I did a month and a half on two assaults to a police officer in an adult jail for that. Every time I get stopped by the police, they run my name. When you get assault on police officers, you are automatically red flagged and they beat on you every time. — Anonymous, *youth collaborator,* Calgary, September 2014.

Alarmingly three youth recounted personal and family experiences with *starlight tours*. *Starlight tours* is a popular term used in Saskatchewan to refer to kidnappings by police to take

Indigenous people to the outskirts of the city and leave them on the highway (Razack, 2014).

Razack documents several of these events and argues that this phenomena emerged due to the

settler's need to maintain the order in the colonial city (Razack, 2014). For Indigenous women,

experiences with policing are often tied to associations with sex work, both real and presumed

(Razack, 2000). An Indigenous young woman explained how this happened to her mother and

led to a chain reaction of experiences of violence and violent indifference:

> Two police drove her out to the outskirts of Edmonton and raped her. She tried going to
> different sources to report them and no one would help her. They even laughed at her.
> She had to hitchhike back into the city. She went with a dude who tried to murder her,
> kept beating her until she was almost dead. Two weeks later they have a picture of that
> guy's truck and his license plate and they talk about this white girl who got abducted by
> the same guy. My mom tried calling the police again. "I know who that is, he tried to kill
> me two weeks ago." They wouldn't take her testimony at all.[30] — Anonymous, *youth
> collaborator*, Calgary, July 2014.

With experiences of trauma and violence as vivid as the ones previously cited in this

section it is not surprising that Indigenous youth have often turned to addictions and suicide as

coping mechanisms. Youth spoke about addictions and suicide as forms of self-inflicted

violence, often acknowledging its destructive effects for themselves and their communities, but

also framing it as a way to relieve pain. Chrisjohn, McKay and Smith argue that addictions and

suicide among Indigenous communities are colonial legacies and a response to ongoing colonial

violence (2014). Thomas Snow, a former youth worker, commented on the connection between

ongoing trauma and death in Indigenous communities:

> We don't always accept colonization, it is like our bodies and spirits reject it to the point
> where we'd rather be freed from it than continue to anguish in it. A young boy that I
> worked with who was in care committed suicide last week. Traumatic experiences fuel
> addiction and that causes the person to burn up inside and that results in the person taking
> their own lives through outright suicide or accidental suicide. Sometimes there are
> accidental deaths that are essentially suicides, car accidents and drug overdoses are good
> examples. —Thomas Snow, *Nakoda Nation Band Council employee*, Calgary, August
> 2014.

---

[30] The youth argues that her mother's involvement in sex work contributed to acts of violence toward her being dismissed. While I was conducting this research a verdict of not guilty was announced for the man believed to be responsible for the murder of another Indigenous woman and sex worker, Cindy Gladue. This verdict was also critiqued within Indigenous communities as indicative of state sanctioned violence against Indigenous women.

Deaths of Indigenous youth have ongoing impacts on families and communities. Angela Gladue created a beaded boom box (figure 9) in honour of her brother who died while in care. She explained how his death was the result of complex circumstances and how it was dismissed and ignored by authorities:

> The environment when I would visit him, I would probably go nuts if I was in there. Being constantly told you are crazy, being treated like you are crazy. He was on such much drugs that they put him on. Like "what were they doing to you in there?" They let him out for a while and he disappeared for a few hours. He was found on the train tracks. My mom thinks that my brother got murdered, she doesn't think that it was a suicide. Social services wouldn't do anything, my mom wanted to do an inquiry and they kept refusing. They just told her to forget about it, "there is nothing you can do." —Angela Gladue, *youth collaborator*, Calgary, August 2014.

Figure 9. "Boombox" by Angela Gladue, youth collaborator

Gladue created a website to feature her artwork under the artist name Miss Chief Rocka. In this website she explains how her artistic creation, and in particular her beaded pieces are dedicated to her brother's memory (Miss Chief Rocka, 2013): "Miss Chief Rocka is dedicated to the memory of my late brother Anthony Marino Gladue. I miss you and love you dearly tony ♥"—Angela Gladue, *youth collaborator*, Miss Chief Rocka, September 2013.

For Gladue, the creative process behind the creation of this piece demonstrates the tremendous impact of her brother's death in her life and how she used art as a coping mechanism. She explained the meaning behind the beaded piece at the Honouring Our Knowledge Gifts conference (figure 10) crying in front of an audience of 200 people as she remembered her brother:

It happened in April 2006 and every year around that time I would get so depressed that I would drop out of school or quit my job, whatever I was doing at the time. Last time it happened was in 2011 when I totally walked off my job. I locked myself in my house for like a month, I barely left. And to feel like a normal person I started beading. And out of something really tragic, I made something really beautiful. So that is kind of like a memorial piece for my brother. It gave me strength.— Angela Gladue, *youth collaborator*, Enoch Nation, November 2014.

Figure 10. Angela Gladue, youth collaborator at Honouring Our Knowledge Gifts conference

The deaths of Indigenous people are often thought to be a result of individual behaviors rather than the environments and state policies that produce them. Broken individuals are thought to inevitably succumb to self-inflicted deaths. The category of high risk, for example is used to dismiss the deaths of Indigenous people in the media, particularly women (Gillchrist, 2010). Numbers of children who died in care and the number of Murdered and Missing Indigenous women were not revealed to the public until late 2013. I looked for news stories about three youth who died after they left care while I was doing my fieldwork and found almost no reporting of it, and none in major news sources. Sherene Razack argues that deaths of Indigenous people are conceptualized as
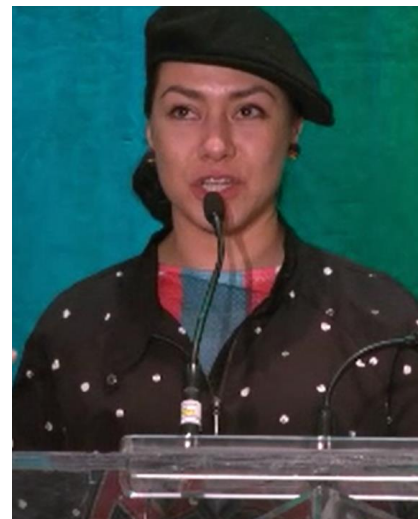
"timely" due to pervasive narratives that Indigenous people cannot cope with the pressure of modern society (2015). She explains the consequences of such narratives by asserting: "when inquests and inquiries instruct us in the pathologies of Indigenous peoples, states provide themselves with alibis not only for inaction but also for crimes of overt violence" (2015, p.5). When Stephen Harper was questioned about whether or not Canada should pursue an inquiry into the deaths of missing and murdered Indigenous women, he replied that it was not a priority for the Canadian government as it was not a "sociological phenomena" but rather individual crimes that should be "solved through police investigations".[31] In other words, from his perspective these deaths are not part of a larger problem that should be addressed at the state level, but rather a combination of isolated incidents. Andrea Smith argues that the state requires racial minorities to sacrifice their rights for its benefit, normalizing violence against them (2014). Their deaths do not threaten the wellbeing of the nation and are merely inevitable. This implies that people of colour are in fact not a part of the state or part of the public; they are collateral damage.

In sum, youth collaborator narratives and artwork discussed in this chapter emphasize the role of settler colonialism in their lives. The narratives of Indigenous youth demonstrate a clear relationship between the child welfare system and ongoing settler colonialism as youth are actively divorced from their communities and subject to experiences with assimilation that impacts their self-concept. There is a strong sense of continuity and overlap between the narratives about displacement, surveillance and violence. Each of these practices is embedded within the child welfare system but also crosses over within other institutions including education, criminal justice, and mental health and homelessness services. Lived experiences with violence are more prevalent and severe among Indigenous women and two-spirit peoples. The impact of these experiences is felt by the youth and their communities and often carries devastating consequences. However, youth are not merely helpless victims who succumb to colonial violence without resistance.

---

[31] CBC News. (2014). Harper rebuffs renewed calls for murdered, missing women inquiry. Retrieved from http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/manitoba/harper-rebuffs-renewed-calls-for-murdered-missing-women-inquiry-1.2742845

I began this chapter with the legend of the willful child that illustrates how violence is seen as necessary to punish undesirable individuals. Apart from that, this legend also embodies resistance: the child refuses to give up and raises her fist to reclaim her existence even from the grave. In the next chapter, I turn my attention to the forms of resistance that youth employ to cope with injustice in their lives.

CHAPTER 3. RESISTANCE

You cried when I was born.
gave me a name, forgot who I was there, your eyes daze
over and focus on the scars on the wall
Spirits lead you away

There, I was taken by the wrist.
They took my name, took my clothes,
took my life and washed it anew.
I cried for the girl
You forgot was inside
I keep her away.

There, Her reflection will sometimes
stare back at me
Wake up and take your name back, she says
My eyes daze over and I focus on living ghosts.

Mother, Do you remember me?
Wake up and take your life back.
Your eyes close and I focus on the blood on the wall.

Try to remember,
I was a daughter once
we want to forget but focus on the pictures on the walls
That we hope
will bring us back home.

You seem to remember-
When you notice the flowers that bloom through the
concrete ground.
When you have true forgiveness for another
Or see a fire that burns and gives new life.
You remember that things can be renewed.
Recalling your true form
Like the souls and souls before your time,
You are resilient.

Tia Ledesma

Figure 11. "Untitled" by Tia Ledesma, youth collaborator

This poem was written by Tia Ledesma, youth collaborator (figure 11). It epitomizes the way youth cope and resist to ongoing injustice in their lives. Ledesma originally wrote it as a way to cope with difficult emotions after her mother was murdered by her partner and after Ledesma left an abusive relationship herself. Then she revised the poem and shared the latest version, first with me and then with public audiences in presentations and art exhibits. This poem reflects major themes of this chapter, which are three forms of resistance: refusal, resurgence and renewal.

I conceptualize resistance within the experiences of Indigenous youth by drawing on Sara Ahmed's work on willful behavior (2014). Ahmed refers to resistance as methods through which minorities assert their own existence despite violent structures, describing willfulness as "persistence in the face of having been brought down, where simply to 'keep going'… is to be stubborn and obstinate" (2014, p.2). Ahmed outlines the potential of willful behavior and how outrageous, audacious, and courageous acts create the possibility of new, alternative realities (2014, p.20). Indigenous youth who grow up in the child welfare system have developed different forms of standing up against dominant systems. Resistance is a means to exert agency over imposed circumstances, facilitates their survival and generates opportunities for creative expression. In this chapter, I examine the relationship between youth acts of resistance and Indigenous anti-colonial struggles.

The first part of the poem is about refusal. Ledesma begins with her birth, describing how her mother cries as she is born. Her mother is focusing on "the scars on the wall" pointing to distant experiences with violence that have left a permanent mark. Then she talks about how being taken into care when her name, clothes and life were recreated or "washed anew". Her narrative is indicative of refusal as she emphasizes the traumatic impact of growing up in care and family violence. Ledesma is challenging dominant systems and ideologies that render these experiences invisible. She then speaks about Indigenous resurgence, which is another theme in this chapter, and how she continues to connect to Indigenous history, spirituality and identity. By weaving together her experiences and those of her mother, she shows the interconnectedness of their struggles. She narrates how she witnesses her mother's spirit fade away. She talks with her mother through the spirit world about finding their true identities, and reclaiming their lives, names and histories. Through her poetry, she shows that despite traumatic experiences she still

has a connection with "living ghosts" and "souls before your time". Spirits serve as both a reminder of past traumas and as a testament that these spirits have prevailed. When she claims that "a fire… burns and gives new life" and that "things can be renewed" she emphasizes renewal and the ability of Indigenous peoples to face ongoing struggles and thrive. This final stanza of the poem shows that within the despair, hope can be found. Similarly, in the final section of this chapter I argue that Indigenous youth are adapting to current realities, combining urban elements in articulations of their identities while reclaiming discourses of sovereignty and tradition in urban settings. Thus Indigenous youth hold incredible transformative potential for Canada as a nation.

Refusal

Youth discourses and behaviors signify different forms of Indigenous refusal. Audra Simpson utilized refusal as concept that describe how Indigenous people, and specifically the Mohawk nation of Kahnawa:ke challenge settler colonialism by simply refusing to "stop being themselves…. They insist on being and acting as peoples who belong to a nation other than the United States or Canada" (2014, p.3). Through active resistance against the state including militant action, political practices and everyday discourses the Mohawks have critiqued and stood up against colonial imposition. Their resistance gained public attention through a seventy-eight day armed standoff between Mohawks in Kanasatake and the Canadian military. Popularly known as the *Oka crisis*, the standoff began on July 11, 1990 and was motivated by a land dispute between the Mohawk and the town of Oka, Quebec (Simpson, 2014). Organized public movements are often the most known forms of Indigenous resistance; however, refusal takes more than one form and often involves individual acts that may not be clearly legible as resistance. Indigenous youth that I spoke with have participated to some extent in conventional organized forms of political resistance visible to the public. However, much of their resistance pertains to everyday encounters where they undermine the systems that have been created to subjugate them.

For Indigenous youth, settler colonialism bears its face in everyday encounters that produce frustration and outrage. Demas' narratives about many of his interactions within

institutions bring to light racism and emphasize the violent and grotesque nature of systems that perpetuate inequality. He described a discussion that took place at a residential facility where an Indigenous staff had introduced the topic of colonialism. One participant in the discussion was described by Demas as a privileged white young man who had been sent to the facility for marijuana use:

> He told me 'Why do we get blamed for everything? All you Natives do is complain about how we gave you alcohol. Plus now you are all getting settlements for saying you got raped in school.' His opinion on it was that we should all shut up, take what we are given and learn to live. 'If you can't stand it that badly then do yourself a favour.' I get those spells some days where I just want to go out and kill every white man I see. —Randy Demas, *youth collaborator*, Calgary, August 2014.

The young man quoted by Demas is employing discourses that minimize the effects of colonization and imply that Indigenous people are to blame for their shortcomings. When the young man suggests that "if you can't stand it… do yourself a favour" he is implying that Indigenous people who cannot cope within society and who are dwelling on the past should commit suicide. While Demas responds with a comment that could be interpreted as unproductive anger, his anger is a response to the constant violence he experiences. Demas' anger reflects a larger movement toward refusal and is an understandable response to a colonial present: "What is treated in the Canadian discourse of reconciliation as an unhealthy and debilitating incapacity to forgive and move on is actually as sign of critical consciousness, of our sense of justice and injustice, and our awareness of and unwillingness to reconcile" (Coulthard 2014, p.126).

Indigenous youth challenge colonialism by bringing attention to state violence in different platforms, despite negative responses. For example, youth collaborator Angela Gladue expressed outrage via Facebook after Colton Crowshoe, an Indigenous youth went missing after being assaulted by the police and the police did not search for him for three weeks. She told me:

> I posted 'I guess you have to be rich, white or living in the suburbs for anyone to give a fuck.' This white girl was saying that it was kind of messed up for me to be putting this on race. I was like 'you don't get it, and I don't think you ever will get it. People are saying whose life is more valuable. It is a fact that more Native women go missing than white women. It is a fact that we get shit on by the police. I am just calling it how it is.' The same thing happened to my brother and my mom, my friend's parents, tons of people

I know and family members. I don't care what anyone thinks of what I post, if it looks like I am being fucking racist. I think their life is valuable and I think his life is just as valuable. —Angela Gladue, *youth collaborator*, Calgary, July 2014.

The majority of the youth I spoke to have developed critical and even antagonistic perspectives toward settler society and the state, as discussed in chapter 2. Randy Demas for example refused to paint the settler state as one whose relationship with Indigenous peoples is an amicable one or one that can be reconciled. He paints a strong continuity between past attempts to marginalize Indigenous communities through residential schools and the child welfare system:

It's been predicted for years. When the government brought in the residential schools they wanted to kill the native culture. I feel the government is still doing that to this day with the [child welfare] system. I think they enjoy the fact that we can't take care of our own kids. —Randy Demas, *youth collaborator*, Calgary, August 2014.

Demas' discussions parallel the thoughts of other youth collaborators by emphasizing the violence inherent in dominant settler colonial discourses and practices, particularly in relation to their experiences in the child welfare system. The antagonistic relationship that Demas described between the settler state and Indigenous peoples echoes the work of Glen Coulthard and Audra Simpson, who reject the dominant narrative of reconciliation for Indigenous peoples in Canada under the politics of recognition and bring forth unforgiving analyses of the Canadian settler state (2014, 2014b). Coulthard defends discourses of refusal arguing that these discourses represent "the externalization of what was previously internalized: a purging, if you will, of the so-called 'inferiority complex' of the colonized subject" (2014, p. 114). Youth recognize themselves and others as oppressed and marginalized through their indigeneity. Their experiences with child welfare, homelessness and incarceration are a testament of systems that have not only failed to protect them from harm, but often reinforced their subjugation. Youth have developed strong critique of state policies and the status quo these policies protect.

Many youth collaborators spoke about information that was gathered about them being used as a weapon against them and their families within child welfare, mental health, criminal justice and other systems. They are aware of how institutional knowledge serves the interest of systems even at the risk of compromising their safety and wellbeing. One major tactic that youth employ in interactions with these systems is silence and withdrawal of information. I learned

about this when I conducted interviews prior to beginning this thesis with youth as part of a mental health agency. I encountered an Indigenous youth who agreed to participate an interview, but offered the most minimal information possible. When I spoke to staff at the facility where he lived, they indicated that he barely spoke to any of them. While I often encountered the assumption that Indigenous youth are naturally quiet and shy, I was told that this young man would only act this way around professionals and had been seen engaging in lively discussions with others outside the facility. As someone involved with the agency, I would never be able to openly talk to him about his experiences with systems. Youth collaborator Aldin Crowchild supported this view when he explained how he learned to be wary of sharing information with institutions: "When I was younger I was taught you are not supposed to talk to them, if you talk to them you get judged, or you are just being a little snitch. You don't talk to professionals" (Calgary, July 2014).

While working on this project, I was able to take a more removed and openly critical role toward the child welfare (dis)placements that enabled different conversations about how silence becomes a way to prevent negative consequences. Youth collaborator, Jana Running Rabbit explained why she chose to speak to me in an interview: "To tell you the truth I never talked to anybody. Social workers would try to talk to me, but I would never talk to them because I felt like I had to protect my family. It feels good though, talking to you and just listening" (Calgary, August, 2014). Running Rabbit emphasizes that interactions with social workers could not be based on trust due to their power to separate families. Therefore, she was grateful for an opportunity to openly share some of her struggles with me without any negative repercussions.

Brendon Peequaquat, another youth collaborator explained how he "didn't say a single thing" while he was placed in mental health and addictions treatment as protest and to prevent his voice from being used against him. We joked about how his actions resembled those of Chief Bromwell, a main character in the novel *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* by Ken Kesey (2002). Chief Bromwell was an Indigenous character who refused to speak at a mental health institution. Peequaquat would remain silent, but held deeply critical perspectives toward the child welfare system and how he was perceived by social workers, psychologists and other professionals:

I didn't think there was anything wrong with me but everybody else made it seem like there was. They asked me how many times I did chemical stuff. I said a couple times a week, so I had to stay there for a whole month. It was horrible. It was like a prison. Especially when I was feeling suicidal they would lock me in my room with a security guard out front. It wasn't fun. I missed like three months of school because I was in Wood's Homes, PChad, AA. My friends were like, 'where were you?' 'I was in hell!' — Brendon Peequaquat, *youth collaborator*, Calgary, September 2014.

Youth find themselves in the midst of what Frantz Fanon refers to as a *paradox of difference*, where they have been forced into relationships with systems and structures, and have to decide how much they are willing to undermine them or succumb to them in order to survive (1967). Thus silence serves as a form of *symbolic compliance*, a term used by James Scott to describe subversive actions that are underpinned by resistance but can be interpreted as ambiguous (2008, pp.54-55). As Randy Demas explained, youth may pretend to absorb institutional knowledge to avoid being punished for dissent: "I was taught the White man's way. I had one strength growing up, I acted like I cared, but I let it go in one ear and out the other, a lot of information they tried to put into my head." — Calgary, August 2014.

Youth rejected narratives that identify them as problem youth and in need of reform through institutionalization. Dorothy Bottrell documented how similar forms of narrative resistance among problem youth were enacted within inner city schools in Australia (2007). In her study, she observed how youth established group identities and resisted outsider's perceptions of them. In many situations Australian youth also resorted to acts of disobedience through refusal to comply with authority (Bottrell, 2007). Similarly youth collaborators in my research recalled active forms of resistance, particularly when their safety and well-being was threatened. Finding ways to physically resist confinement and violence also becomes an important strategy for survival. Peequaquat explains how he encountered a situation with a police officer that made him feel unsafe but was able to escape:

A cop tried arresting me and he made it seem like he was talking to someone on the radio but it was turned off. He didn't put handcuffs on me or anything, but he put me in the backseat. The door was cracked open just a bit so I kicked it open and I just ran. That is one of the reasons I ran away from Calgary for like 2 years, I was scared. —Brendon Peequaquat, *youth collaborator*, Calgary, August 2014.

Experiences such as these feed critical perspectives and encourage youth to learn how to stand up for themselves and their rights. Peequaquat elaborated on how negative experiences with police such as the one described above informed his future encounters:

> Ever since all that stuff happened I always whip out my phone too and I start recording whenever a cop pulls me over. They always try to tell you that you can't record them, but 'it is like for my safety'. I follow this page on Facebook, it is called Copblock and Copwatch too. —Brendon Peequaquat, *youth collaborator*, Calgary, August 2014.

The state identifies acts of disobedience as potentially dangerous and imposes penalties for these actions that actually place youth at greater risk. For example, resisting police by talking back or fighting back can lead youth to further experiences with violence, incarceration and in some cases death. When youth refuse to accept the status quo and reject authority, this is frowned upon and labelled as self-destructive behavior. This behavior can be medicalized, as youth are often treated for conditions such as *Oppositional Defiant Disorder,* used to explain the seemingly irrational refusal of authority (Hamilton and Armando, 2008, p.861). When examining the environment within which Indigenous youth refuse and reject institutional policies, their behaviors are perceived as competing with state interests.

Many of the forms of resistance that youth employ parallel those that were used in residential schools. Scholars have documented forms of every-day resistance by students including grabbing weapons used to punish them, passing secret notes, covertly speaking their Indigenous language or running away from the schools (Agnes, 2006; Deiter, 1999; Archibald, 1993; Jaine, 1993; Knockwood and Thomas, 1992; Haig-Brown, 1988). Tsianina Lomawaima describes resistance in schools as largely covert, although there were groups of youth categorized as overt resistors who ran greater risk of being punished (1994, p.124).

Acts of refusal by Indigenous peoples are often dismissed within dominant discourses as uncooperative or morally illegitimate. Rather, many mainstream perspectives in Indigenous contexts advocate for negotiation and diplomacy (Coulthard, 2014, p.166). In defense of refusal, Glen Coulthard challenges claims that negotiations and co-operation are more effective. Coulthard argues that acts of refusal are necessary to enact other ways of being and that refusal of the Canadian state and reclamation of Indigenous alternatives are dependent on one another

(pp.167-169). Similarly, Indigenous youth showcase the value and necessity of refusal. Given that many of the circumstances that youth find themselves in are non-consensual (e.g., child welfare, incarceration), it is clear to youth that they have very little say about what is deemed to be in their best interests. For Indigenous youth, refusal is often a pathway to developing alternative discourses and communities grounded on resistance and mutual support.

Resurgence

Indigenous scholars use the concept of Indigenous resurgence to explain how Indigenous peoples are creating alternative realities to those created by settler colonialism (Simpson, 2014; Simpson, 2008; Alfred, 2005). Audra Simpson argues that "willed death", or the enactment of state sanctioned violence and violent indifference, defines Indigenous political life, therefore resurgence means insisting on the life of your nation (2014: p.185). More specifically, resurgence takes shape through enacting "values that challenge the homogenizing force of Western liberalism and free-market capitalism, that honour the autonomy of individual conscience, non-coercive authority, and the deep interconnection between human beings and other elements of creation" (Alfred, 1999, p.60). The diverse ways in which Indigenous people reclaim their lives, well-being and preserve cultural practices signify a form of resistance and empowerment "from below" (Coulhard, 2014). Despite their significant experiences with displacement and assimilation Indigenous youth collaborators have engaged in the process of reclaiming their Indigenous identity.

First, youth are fighting for Indigenous survival through their personal wellbeing. As Audre Lorde indicates, surviving in the context of violent states is a revolutionary act: "caring for myself is not self-indulgence, it is self-preservation, and that is an act of political warfare." (1988, p.131). Similarly for Indigenous youth, caring for themselves is an act of dissent towards the settler colonial state. Every breath that they take is a challenge to the colonial project that has sought to eliminate them. An important aspect to reclaiming their own life is reclaiming their self-worth. Dallas White Eagle explained how he seeks to reclaim his life in the context of ongoing trauma:

You start telling yourself or forcing yourself, saying I'm strong enough or I can do this. I look at some of these people who have rich parents and a silver spoon up the ass, and I'm glad that I went through what I went through because I've learned a lot more than those kids did. The things that keep you down, you can kind of use them as a way to keep you up. —Dallas White Eagle, *youth collaborator*, Calgary, September 2014.

A crucial step for youth in reclaiming their own value lies in self-recognition. Frantz Fanon (1967) and Glen Coulthard (2014) have advocated for self-recognition as an alternative to the politics of recognition. Self-recognition entails understanding and reclaiming the transformative power of one's difference. I heard the expression "silver spoon up the ass," which is a variation of the expression "born with a silver spoon in your mouth", from youth collaborators on numerous occasions to describe class privilege. By using this phrase youth are challenging capitalist ideologies that equate wealth with superiority and strength and asserting alternative dialogues where they do not need to succeed through accumulating capital to affirm their self-worth.

While society has been giving youth the message that they are irreparably damaged, youth resist this idea and find ways to persevere and re-claim their lives. For Shalome Hope, this has taken shape in the form of overcoming addiction after coming close to death:

My immune system attacked my muscles. My body went into a shape, it is like when you die, rigor mortis. I had to take a lot of serious medication and steroids and learn how to walk again. Had I ignored the signs of illness, I would have died. I finally had had enough and went into recovery. I stopped all these addictions. My life was saved twice, because I was treated in time for Dermatomyocitis and again from the disease of addiction.—Shalome Hope, youth collaborator, Calgary, August 2014.

In the previous chapter, I have discussed the difficulties for urban youth to connect with their broader communities at reserve referring to the cultural divide. Despite being forcibly separated from other Indigenous peoples, indigenous youth who have grown up in care often fight to remain connected with family as a form of cultural survival. For Michee, reconnecting with her mother felt like an instinct she had from a young age after she found out her foster parents were not her biological parents: "When I was 13, I started running away. I kept running back to her. Everywhere she was. If I could get to her, I ran to her. Break windows, jump out and

run. I put my foster parents through hell and back. I was fighting for this woman." —Michee, *youth collaborator*, Calgary, September 2014.

Reconnecting with family is also a difficult process as family ties were severed and relationships are often damaged through involvement with the child welfare system. As discussed previously, youth often deal with feeling of abandonment by their family members. Michee explained how she learned to forgive her mother once she understood her life experiences that led to her being taken away:

> My mom went through a lot. She was in and out of foster care, she bounced around to almost 50 different houses. That's one thing about being a foster kid, you can blame your parents so much. But when you sit down and understand what hell they are going through. You think 'could I have raised a child while being addicted to this, and going through this emotionally?' And you think, 'no, I would just let them go.' And then it hits you, and you're like 'fuck, ok, my mom is not too bad of a person'. —Michee, *youth collaborator*, Calgary, September 2014.

The insistence of youth to remain connected with family is indicative of what Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg scholar Leanne Simpson describes in her work as decolonial love referring to the relational bonds that drive Indigenous peoples in the face of colonialism (2013). Mohawk scholar Patricia Monture-Angus has argued for the central role of love in Indigenous resistance. She claims that Indigenous peoples must not only fight but love with every fiber of their being and care for future generations (1996). This idea was present in the narratives of many Indigenous youth in how they choose to care for others even though by and large they were not provided loving environments while in care. Love is a part of resurgence and is exhibited through compassion and understanding that youth develop toward their family members.

Monture-Angus highlighted the role of Indigenous women in anti-colonial resistance against the heteropatriarchal state and colonial child welfare policies. Monture-Angus envisioned an Indigenous feminism that values women's contributions to family and society (2008). For the few Indigenous women that participated in this project who were able to keep their children, raising them is nourishing future generations and reclaiming traditional practices. Tia Ledesma explained this a guest lecture for Contemporary Indigenous issues (figure 12):

In Blackfoot culture it is said that we do not own our children. But rather they are loaned to us from the creator. Caring for our children is a blessing and a means of resisting colonialism. Keeping natural families together creates stronger and healthier communities in the face of systems that seek to separate us. I am breaking the cycle of abuse and trauma. Doing that means caring for my kids and my brother's kids. —Tia Ledesma, *youth collaborator*, Calgary, November 2014.

Figure 12. Tia Ledesma, youth collaborator, at guest lecture for contemporary Indigenous issues. Photo by Michelle Robinson

Ledesma's brothers have more than a dozen children combined who have been taken into the child welfare system. When her twelve year old nephew was placed in a residential treatment facility in 2014 Ledesma fought to have him live with her. She succeeded and noted that upon living with her many of his problem behaviours that had been the reason for him going into treatment were now absent and he seemed to be functioning better in the family. Raising children becomes a way for youth to break cycles of family separation and the intergenerational trauma that ensues from this practice. Youth collaborator, Laura Dionne Royal explained:

I am just being a mom trying to teach my daughter right from wrong. To be proud of being Aboriginal and everything, but to not force her into believing anything she shouldn't without giving her a chance to think for herself. I just want to give her the life I didn't have" —Laura Dionne Royal, *youth collaborator*, Calgary, August 2014.

While youth are critical of dominant institutions, they also want to create change by seeking employment within the very systems that marginalized them over the course of their lives. I was initially surprised at how many youth wanted to become social workers, police officers, lawyers, etc. despite the intense discrimination and violence they had faced within these systems. For some youth, this path was unlikely as many of these professions required a clean criminal record. For others who have succeeded in pursuing this path, helping professions bring a unique set of challenges. Ledesma wanted to become a social worker, so she began working as
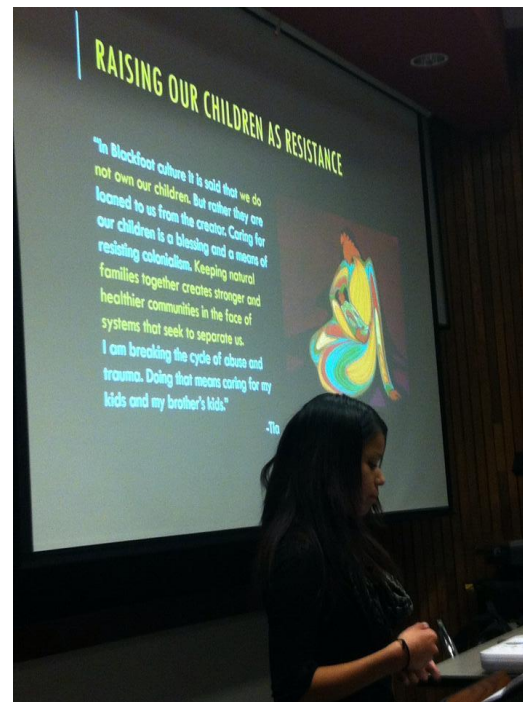
an administrative assistant at a child welfare office. Pursuing this path brought out emotional and moral difficulties, which led her to change her aspirations. As part of her work, Ledesma interacted with social workers and heard their perspectives on cases and apprehensions of youth. She explained to me:

> I was working at Siksika Office with social workers, and they would debrief about what happened that day, and I just thought I couldn't apprehend, like I couldn't actually be a social worker. So I was just happy that, I actually didn't take that route. Taking kids away from their parents, like not only would it be emotional, but it would also have a personal connection to myself. —Tia Ledesma, *youth collaborator*, Calgary, August 2014.

Upon observing the dynamics in a child welfare office, Ledesma realized that she would be working in a system where the apprehension of youth was deemed inevitable. To work in the child welfare system would involve enacting policies that are in direct conflict with her values. Therefore, she illustrates that generating change within the system is difficult, as Indigenous youth are bound by institutional policies.

Franz Fanon provides a profound critique of working within systems that supports Ledesma's observations, asserting that without conflict and struggle, colonial subjects will continue to be limited to obtaining the freedoms that their "masters" are willing to grant them (1991, p.211). Glen Coulthard argues that this critique is relevant to Indigenous-settler relations within dominant institutions. By claiming that liberation in a larger sense continues to be made impossible as "the state, the courts, corporate interests and policy makers… preserve the colonial status quo" (2014, p.40) and efforts from Indigenous actors have often replicated them even when they sought to undermine them (2014, p.179). Therefore creating change at a systemic level is an unlikely possibility. In light of this context, Leanne Simpson asserts: "I am not so concerned with how we dismantle that master's house, that is, which set of theories we use to critique colonialism; but I am very concerned with how we (re)build our own house, or our own houses." (2011, p.32)[32] Her assertion relates strongly to how youth find transformational opportunities within Indigenous institutional contexts.

---

[32] Simpson references the title of Audre Lorde's essay "The Master's tools will never dismantle the Master's house" (2003).

Youth cited the positive role of organizations by Indigenous people for Indigenous people, such as USAY and the Riel Institute for Education and Learning, and Indigenous people they had met through institutions who had made an impact on them. Youth collaborator Tia Ledesma, for example, explained the role of Native Studies programs in her understanding of her own life and her experiences with child welfare and domestic violence: "I went to the Riel Institute for Education and Learning. It was all about learning about Native Studies, sharing in a circle. That is when I began to understand and to heal. Before I went there I didn't comprehend there was a cycle going on" (Calgary, August 2014) .In this institution, Ledesma learned about similarities between her experiences with domestic violence and in the hands of child welfare and those of previous generations of Indigenous people.

These positive experiences show how spaces for change can be created within and parallel to dominant institutions, helping Indigenous people struggle for freedom in their own terms and in accordance with their own values. Patricia Monture-Angus has defined them as *Red Spaces* where Indigenous peoples can interact, support one another and escape colonial institutions (1999). Anne McGillivray asserts the value of such spaces in relation to child welfare, claiming that "community-oriented projects stand in contradiction to the top-down disciplined approaches reflected in the Canadian governance of childhood" (1995: p.vii). Therefore, institutions can provide important spaces for self-recognition and support the building of an Indigenous resurgence movement.

Participating in Indigenous traditions and ceremonies is another important aspect of preserving cultural practices. This is a difficult task for some youth who have limited access to these and may also feel disconnected from them due to their experiences in the child welfare system and in urban environments. However, there are examples of how youth managed to engage in traditional learning and community life in cities and by visiting reserves. Youth collaborator Aldin Corwchild for example, said to me that elders provide emotional and spiritual support for him and his community: "We gotta be the people who stand up. The abuse and everything that we went through, it is hard to dust that off. But there is a lot of elders who are helping us, guiding us the right way and trying to show us the spiritual way."(Calgary, August 2014). Youth collaborator, Shalome Hope cited her attendance at an annual *Aboriginal*

Addictions Awareness walk as the catalyst for her continued involvement in other events and feeling part of a larger Indigenous community. She told me:

> They were round dancing and smiling and happy. I could smell smudge, and the drums and something about being there, I was like "I belong!" I recognized that I had a community and I followed that. There was a lot of Hokey Pokey things, like fake feathers and beads but people having a good intention. —Shalome Hope, *youth collaborator*, Calgary, August 2014.

Some youth collaborators referred to Pow Wows as having helped them connect to Indigenous cultures and communities. In the 1970s, the Pow Wow emerged as an intertribal gathering featuring dancing, drumming and singing. These gatherings are structured as a competition for cash prizes, and feature elaborate costumes created from organic and synthetic fabrics. Pow Wows promote the adaptation of traditional dances and ceremonies to contemporary contexts. The photo on figure 13 was taken by Red Crow at a Pow Wow that we attended at Tsuu T'ina Nation. She stood on a ledge and

Figure 13. "Dancers" by Virginia Red Crow, youth collaborator

took photographs of the dancers as they prepared for *Grand Entry*. Red Crow reflected on how Indigenous dancers inspire her to remain connected to her traditions: "When I look at the dancers and the drummers, it makes me feel that there is always hope. They are proud to be dancers. They are really spiritual, they know Blackfoot. They understand the music and they sing along to it." —Virginia Red Crow, *youth collaborator* (Calgary, August 2015).

Glen Coulthard argues that Indigenous resurgence is based on reconnecting to the land. The land serves as a form of pedagogy that can teach Indigenous peoples about "living our lives in relation to one another and our surroundings in a respectful, non-dominating and non-exploitative way" (2014, p.60). Coulthard reflects on how this could take shape by:

> Walking the land in an effort to refamiliarize ourselves with the landscapes and places that give our histories, languages and cultures shape and content; to revitalizing and engaging in land-based harvesting practices like hunting, fishing and gathering, and/or cultural production activities like hide-tanning and carving all of which also serve to assert our sovereign presence on our territories in ways that can be profoundly educational and empowering; to the reoccupation of sacred places for the purposes of relearning and practicing our ceremonial activities" (2014, p.171).

The land-based ontology that Coulthard outlines below is one that relates to youth's struggles but also presents many complications. What counts as walking the land given continued histories of displacement such as the reserve system and recent urban migration? While youth are drawn to ceremonial practices and learning from the land, some of the practices that Coulthard outlines are less accessible to them due to their confinement in the child welfare system and living in urban centres. For youth, the reserve represents culture and community from which they have lost connection. For example, Red Crow's photograph (figure 13) represents both the pride that she holds for those keeping Indigenous traditions alive, but also her feelings of being disconnected from her culture and community. She told me:

> I was kind of feeling like I wish I went to more Pow Wows because I didn't know anyone there. I was jealous too. When I see them dancing, I glare at them. I'm like "Damn you…' I would like to be spiritual but I think I would have to live on the reserve. We have like sweet grass, where we come from, it grows there. —Virginia Red Crow, *youth collaborator*, Calgary, August 2014.

Mi'kmaw scholar Bonita Lawrence echoes Red Crow's sentiment through her assertion that urban Indigenous populations require "some form of mutually agreed upon, structured access to land-based communities" (2004, p.232).

In sum, Indigenous youth find ways to reclaim their value and culture despite their experiences with assimilation and violence. These practices reflect current scholarship on Indigenous resurgence. However, the scholarship on land-based resurgence does not adequately

capture urbanized forms of resistance that do not appear on the surface to fit neatly into traditional land-based practice. In the next section I explore how Indigenous youth's experiences in cities generate opportunities to embed Indigenous identities within urban subcultures and make important contributions to Indigenous resistance in cities, including renewal.

Renewal

On 13-14 November, 2014, Levi First Charger, Rita Henderson, and youth collaborators, including Virginia Red Crow, Dallas White Eagle, Tia Ledesma and Dylan Desjarlais and myself presented at *Honouring Our Knowledge Gifts: An Aboriginal Research Forum*. This event was a two day conference held in Enoch Nation and organized by the *Alberta Centre for Child, Family and Community Research*. There were a number of presentations that focused on the journey of Indigenous elders, scholars and service providers aiming to connect with what had been lost through colonialism. Our presentation also touched on this subject. Angela Gladue spoke about her involvement in Fancy Dance, a style that she learned at a young age prior to being taken into care, while attending an Indigenous-run elementary school on Frog Lake Nation. She showed a video of her performing alongside Métis Cellist Cris Derksen at the Truth and Reconciliation gathering in Edmonton[33] and referred to Fancy Dancing as "one of the only ways I connect with being First Nations."

Four "youth witnesses" were asked by the organizers of the conference to share their reflections at the end of each day. An Indigenous youth provided a brief but important assertion in response to the content that was shared stating that he had learned that "Native youth in foster care don't have culture." I heard this statement time and time again either implicitly or explicitly that Indigenous youth, through experiences in child welfare and being moved to city, become assimilated into "white culture", losing all connection with their Native identity. In this section I argue against this notion, by demonstrating that youth contribute valid expressions of Indigenous identity and culture within urban settings.

---

[33] Derksen,C. (2014). "War Cry" Feat. Joy Mullen and Angela Gladue. Retrieved from https://youtu.be/eSOu_4BoVmg

Increased numbers of Indigenous youth in cities present a complex phenomena that, one the one hand, can potentially lead to assimilation, but, on the other, has given rise to a distinct form of urbanized resistance. Historically in Canada, cities were created and maintained as settler spaces (Razack, 2014) relying on the displacement of Indigenous peoples to reserves for urban development and expansion. Reserves were treated by the Canadian state as holding stations to segregate Indigenous peoples until their full assimilation could be achieved (McGillivray, 1995). Since the mid-twentieth century, this divide has been shifting: today, approximately 50% of Indigenous peoples live in cities.[34] For Indigenous youth collaborators, life on the reserve is a distant reality as they have been residing in cities and towns for most of their lives. The child welfare system, as discussed earlier, is instrumental in urban migration and assimilation, as youth are often moved to cities. While many youth retain family ties to reserves, they do not see themselves as fitting into reserve environments and often prefer cities. Youth collaborator Virginia Red Crow asserted: "When you grow up on a reserve it is really laid back. There is not that much resources. If you were to be in the city you would be able to get a job, you'd be able to find school, you'd see a different lifestyle beyond the reserve" (Calgary, August 2014).

There is a cultural divide between city life and what youth refer to as "Rez life". For many youth, reserves epitomize inequality and lack of opportunities. However, they also see reserves as cultural centres where Indigenous cultural practices and rights to land can be preserved. City life is often equated with assimilation and a symbolic loss of Indigenous status. Youth who grow up in child welfare and in cities are often referred to as *apples*, red on the outside but white on the inside. Youth collaborator Brendon Peequaquat explained: "I get looked at when I go to the reserve because I'm a City Native" (Calgary, July 2014). There is an implication that because of their experiences, youth no longer belong to Indigenous communities, reflecting as Audra Simpson argues a "conflation of white with the city, Indian with the reserve" (2014, p.189).

---

[34] Statistics Canada. (2011). Aboriginal Peoples in Canada: First Nations People, Metis and Inuit. National Household Survey. Retrieved from http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/nhs-enm/2011/as-sa/99-011-x/99-011-x2011001-eng.cfm

The development of a distinctly urban Indigenous identity is apparent in youth's narratives, as they seek to integrate different aspects of their histories into their lives. For example, Angela Gladue drew on the words of an Indigenous elder in one of our discussions who told her that "to live in this modern society and uphold our native culture, it is like walking with a moccasin on one foot and a Nike shoe on the other" (August 2014). She uses this quote to guide her discussions of how she has adapted both traditional and modern influences in her life. When I shared this quote with an Indigenous youth worker who lived on a reserve for most of her life, she indicated to me "I feel like our youth are wearing two Nike shoes", pointing to a loss of connection to Indigenous traditions. While many youth agree that they have lost part of their identity, there are many ways in which youth manage to uphold Indigenous practices and identities within an urban context. Audra Simpson argues that the notion of tradition has produced a narrow, structured expectation of a culturally "pure" Indigenous subject and ignores the role of settler colonialism in shaping Indigenous subjectivities (2007). She argues that imaging Indigenous peoples as remnants of "lost worlds… perfect timeless tradition… sets up an impossible burden of proof on Indigenous claimants today" (Simpson, 2014, p.163). These assertions are important to understand why Indigenous youth experience feeling like outsiders and often not accepted by members of their nations or other Indigenous peoples due to living in the city or having been in the child welfare system. Indigenous youth are deprived of full status in some cases because they have been disconnected from tradition, rendering them in "need of culture", rather than examining the complexity of their relationship to Indigeneity.

Glen Coulthard argues that the efficacy of Indigenous anti-colonial movements "hinges on its ability to address interrelated systems of dispossession that shape Indigenous experiences in both urban and land-based settings (2015, p.176). This is particularly important for Indigenous youth who have been in the child welfare system, as their inclusion in anti-colonial struggles can challenge assimilationist policies. Bonita Lawrence envisions solidarity between Indigenous communities based in reserves and urban centres but asserts that it requires that both groups reconceptualise Indigenous identity and nationhood in a way that refuses to replicate the colonial definitions that created the urban/reserve divide in the first place (2004, p.246). Youth collaborator Angela Gladue shows how one reconceptualization might look like, by arguing that the city where she lived most of her life is in fact, Indigenous territory. She told me: "I am from

Edmonton, Alberta and I am a descendant of Papaschase, the real Edmonton before the government kicked out everybody and took over. The Natives moved to surrounding reserves and pretty much lost their status because they were tricked into signing a Métis clause" (Calgary, August 2014).[35] She envisions her ancestral and traditional territory is one that has been impacted by urbanization. Her assertion challenges the idea that Indigenous people have no place in urban settings, and that by existing in urban spaces, they are claiming what is rightfully theirs.

Many Indigenous collaborators see cities as places where they can make distinctive contributions without renouncing their Indigeneity. Articulations of urban identity often carry with them specific politicized messages and practices. These forms of being are often dismissed by older generations as unfaithful to Indigenous traditions and symbolize a crisis of identity. However, Indigenous youth articulate their urban identities by explicitly referencing Indigenous signifiers and also draw on a broader narrative of a racialized political identity. For example, Brendon Peequaquat's tattoo art is reflective of his affinity to subcultures of embodied difference and is a way for him to express different aspects of his worldview and position in society. In his tattoo art, he draws on Indigenous imagery while also combining straight edge subculture, traditional American tattoo style and Buddhist symbols. He indicated: "I want to get back into the Native culture. I want to get a whole bunch of Native stuff tattooed on me" (Calgary, August 2015).

Youth connect with culture in meaningful ways that are not expected or considered traditional but have profound meaning. Each element of these designs is not merely chosen for aesthetic purposes, but as a way to explain different aspects of Peequaquat's biography and worldview. The photo on the left in figure 14 is a drawing of Indigenous woman that he tattooed on his leg. The inverted cross, which he has placed under her eye is meant to look like a prison tattoo. In Peequaquat's tattoo, the cross symbolises the detrimental impact of the Christian Church on Indigenous communities. The drawing on the top right references straight edge subculture, with a hand marked with an X. Straight edge is affiliated with punk subculture and predicated on a *drug free* ideology. Peequaquat also incorporates the image of the third eye to

---

[35] The Papaschase were illegally evicted from their reserve land in order to secure land for the expansion of the railway and Southern Edmonton. The vacation of the reserve facilitated loss of Indian status and band membership. Retrieved from http://www.papaschase.ca/history.html

signify his relationship to Buddhism as a strategy helping him to cope with trauma, addictions and mental health issues. The woman pictured at the bottom right is an animal cowl, a design that is popular in traditional American tattoos, which emerged in the late nineteenth century and often incorporated Native American iconography. When asked about the meaning of this last piece, he indicated that it was reflective of his emotional state at the time he was grieving over his grandmother who had passed away. While American traditional tattooing and straight edge subcultures did not emerge from Indigenous communities, he reinterprets this iconography as reflecting his own history and identity.

Figure 14. Tattoo flash by Brendon Peequaquat, youth collaborator

Artistic expression is instrumental for Indigenous youth to articulate their place in society and contemporary influences. In particular, many Indigenous youth that I worked with have a strong affinity to hip hop. By claiming an urban or street aesthetic Indigenous peoples challenge the idea that their identities are limited to the traditional or belong in the past (Navarro, 2014, p.103). For Angela Gladue, involvement in hip hop is central to articulating contemporary Indigenous realities. She explained this at the Honouring Our Knowledge Gifts conference:

A lot of people's views of First Nations seems to be stuck in a box. If you are not looking like Cowboys and Indians back in the day you are not relevant to today. Hip hop comes from oppression, people that were displaced. The blacks and the Puerto Ricans in New York. Nothing left for them and a lot of drugs and violence. Kids created the dance, the music, the spoken word, the poetry, the art. These were ways that they were claiming where they were and who they were. We have similar struggles. The parallels are really apparent. That is why I think a lot of First Nations are into hip hop. —Angela Gladue, *youth collaborator*, Enoch Nation, November 2014.

As Gladue explained, to be involved in hip hop often brings with it an acknowledgement of racial oppression and displacement. It is also a form of reclamation of the value of Indigenous peoples in

Figure 15. Kurly's Piece" by Angela Gladue, youth collaborator

environments where they are not supposed to be. The piece in figure 15 was made by Gladue for Indigenous graffiti artist Kurly who created the design. She explained "This piece is a satire of the oppression of our people. The Cleveland Indians mascot head, which I turned into a skull" (Calgary, August 2014). A combination of Indigenous beadwork with street style is evident in this piece. They use the piece to make a social commentary on the position of Indigenous peoples in society today. They resist the myth of the "dead Indian" an Indigenous person relegated to the past, as well as the objectification of Indigenous peoples as mascots for sports teams.

Urban spaces occupied by Indigenous peoples are targets for re-displacement within cities through gentrification (Coulthard, 2014, p.175). Areas that have been targeted for development become the new Terra Nullius. Coulthard argues that this is another frontier of

dispossession that must be challenged. Youth confront this situation by remaining in the downtown core despite policing and surveillance indicating that they are not wanted in these spaces. Some Indigenous youth reclaim urban spaces by creating graffiti. Inspired by an urban aesthetic, graffiti is another form of resisting the policing of how spaces should be used and by whom. Tyler Blackface would paint or *tag* his artist name "sober" throughout the city. By tagging, he creates alternative spaces within a city that are meant not merely for "productive" use but also for artistic expression.

Blackface created this art piece (figure 16) to display at the Treaty 7 health conference. He explained: "I did this canvas to represent how important sobriety is to me. The graffiti style is used to represent my take on modern Native art. The dots represent the lives of those affected by alcoholism." (Calgary, September 2014). This painting is incorporating urban styles and conveys the impact of addictions on Indigenous peoples. It is important to note that each art piece showcased through this project bring personal experiences to a certain level of abstraction which renders those concrete experiences illegible to unfamiliar audiences. Charlotte Townsend-Gault argues that sometimes art conceals more than it reveals, thus protecting knowledge from being
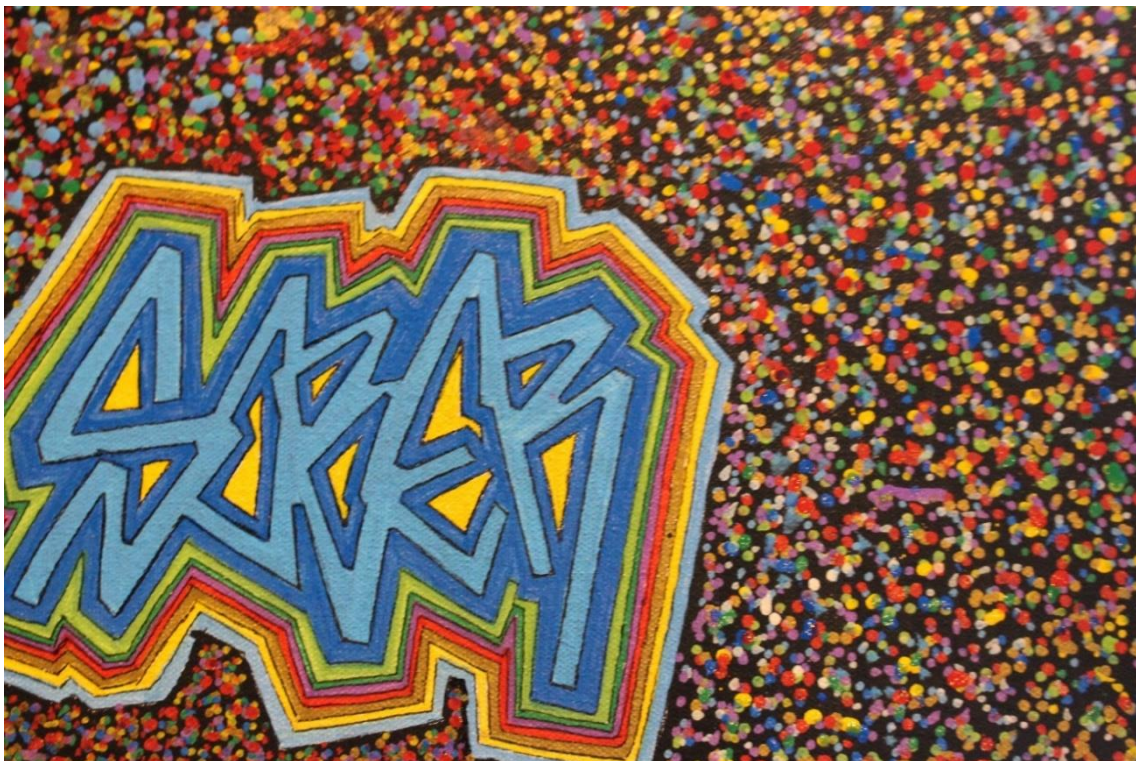

Figure 16. "Sober" by Tyler Blackface, youth collaborator

abused or oversimplified and acknowledging that some knowledge is not translatable (1992, p.168). This is precisely the case with Blackface's art, as writing "sober" can have multiple interpretations and obscures his own personal experiences with sobriety and substance use. Art is a mode of communication to express their life experiences without having to disclose specific details and to curtail the potential of having their voice used against them.

In sum, Indigenous youth are engaged in active resistance throughout the course of their lives. Resistance is a method to ensure their physical and cultural survival. I have outlined three main forms of resistance: refusal, resurgence and renewal. Resistance takes shape through questioning and rejection of dominant structures and ideologies, reclaiming Indigeneity and challenging dispossession in urbanized contexts. Youth narratives and art show a diverse repertoire of tactics for resisting colonialism contributing to academic dialogues on resistance among Indigenous peoples. Taken individually, these personal acts may not appear to have much significance, but combined they represent a youth movement to challenge and create alternatives to settler colonialism. In the conclusion, I examine the key lessons from this project as they relate to theoretical, methodological and societal concerns.

CONCLUSION

On October 27th, 2014 I was at the Alberta Housing and Homelessness Research Strategy Launch in Edmonton, territory of the Treaty 6 Nations. The event was a one day conference featuring leading researchers, practitioners and policy makers in the homelessness sector. Rita Henderson and I had been invited to do a plenary presentation on Indigenous youth's experiences with housing insecurity. I took a bus to Edmonton with youth collaborator Tyler Blackface who was my co-presenter. The morning of the conference, Blackface was nowhere to be found. The previous night, he had left to meet a friend that he knew in the city and I had not heard from him since. I presented without him. When he eventually arrived, he had a big gash on his face. He shared with me that he had been attacked the previous night and was left stranded on the other side of town.

After I spoke reporting findings from the present project, the emcee remarked to the audience that she wished the subsequent presentations would be "more hopeful." For me, this response showed a lack of empathy for the struggles of youth that I had presented and was particularly problematic given that Blackface was missing at the time and had been victimized. Other speakers offered a much more encouraging message, reporting on the "success" of different initiatives and advocating for more intensive institutional interventions to better the lives of those who experience homelessness. The analysis I presented was incompatible with this discourse, as it challenged the very nature of these services. The voices of Indigenous peoples were largely absent as part of the conference. Blackface was the only Indigenous presenter slotted in the entire agenda and one of two presenters that had experienced homelessness firsthand. To my knowledge, there were a small number of Indigenous people attending the conference including the elder who provided an opening prayer, a woman selling Indigenous crafts, a few youth workers and Tyler Blackface, who was not able to speak out.

Tyler Blackface regained other opportunities to speak candidly about his experiences. The Eight Fire conference took place at the University of Calgary on 15 March, 2015 and focused on Indigenous resurgence. Before he started his speech, Blackface (pictured in figure 18) said to an audience that included many Indigenous people: "I am pretty nervous right now. I

didn't sleep much last night." An audience members yelled "You can do it!!" and cheering
ensued. Then he continued:

Figure 17. Tyler Blackface, youth collaborator at the 8th Fire Gathering. Photo by Michelle Robinson

> I am here to tell you about my story. Growing up I didn't know my parents at all. I just met my birth mom last year when I was 21. I wasn't raised in a Native home, I was raised in a white home. Growing up in care was for me a blessing and curse. I am happy to have the knowledge and the education that I was raised with. But at the same time they tried to whitewash me. Sorry for using that term. They wouldn't let me go to Pow Wows, they didn't let me do anything traditional. I didn't get into any of that stuff until I left care. I ran away. I just couldn't take it anymore. The whole time I was in care I was wondering 'why did my parents leave me?' like resenting them, hating them. Finally last year when I met my mom I found out it wasn't anything like that at all.
>
> Joining this program[36], it kind of happened out of nowhere. I went to this one agency and they asked me if I would be interested in it. I hadn't done art for a while so I joined up. All of the people I have met throughout this whole program, coming to these conference, even though I am nervous when I come to them, it lifts this weight off my shoulders being able to tell people my story. I have a child on the way. This child being a blessing, everything that I have encountered in the last year, especially this program, it is turning me into the person I want to be. These paintings I made for the project are probably my favorite paintings that I have done. They mean a lot to me. — Tyler Blackface, *youth collaborator*, Calgary, March 2015.

In this project I sought to examine how experiences of Indigenous youth who have been in the child welfare system can help develop a better understanding of settler colonialism. These two contrasting scenarios chronicle how this project has taken shape in different contexts from my perspective and the perspective of one of the youth collaborators. For me, the first scenario serves as a reminder that settler colonialism is perpetuated by institutional practices and that it is

---

[36] The term program, which is used often in non-profit contexts to describe modes of service provision, was used by a number of youth collaborators and community members during the dissemination stage of the project. The use of this term highlights how the initiative came to be reinterpreted as a form of institutionalized support to "help" Indigenous youth.

difficult to create alternatives to dominant power dynamics that exclude Indigenous and other critical perspectives. The second scenario where Blackface spoke to the audience highlights that there is a potential to disrupt hegemonic discourse by bringing youth voices forward and letting youth speak for themselves. This was the seventh presentation that Blackface had been involved in since the project began. He describes how participating in this initiative has helped him come to terms with his experiences and reconnect with his identity.

I began this thesis with some of my reflections conducting research at the mental health agency, which ignited my interest in the experiences of Indigenous youth. This earlier research led me to question who exactly the child welfare system served and whether or not youth experiences were tied to larger historical processes. In this thesis, using a framework of settler colonialism, I have drawn connections between the child welfare system and larger state systems of violent dispossession and control over Indigenous populations. There are numerous statistics and research about the inequality that Indigenous peoples are facing, but in this project I wanted to relate these discourses specifically to the perspectives of Indigenous youth who were in the child welfare system. In doing so, I saw value in speaking about forms of violence that are often rendered silent and examine different ways that youth resist against injustice.

This thesis contributes to the work of Indigenous scholars, particularly the work of Audra Simpson and Glen Coulthard on settler colonialism, and how it is enacted in both larger contexts and every day experiences. Youth testimonies and artwork bring a unique perspective by bringing attention to how Indigenous children continue to be prime targets for settler colonial projects. Youth perspectives highlight how child welfare acts as a continuation of assimilationist policies seeking to both literally and metaphorically eliminate Indigenous peoples. By being removed from their families Indigenous youth becomes sites of conquest, to be rebranded and integrated into white settler society. Simultaneously, youth are deemed damaged and are criminalized and displaced throughout their lives. The trauma generated by these practices serves as an instrumental force to disempower Indigenous youth, particularly women and two-spirit individuals among them. Indigenous youth are deeply impacted by colonial systems that claim their lives and damage their wellbeing.

This thesis demonstrates that the child welfare system does not serve as a solution to the underlying issues facing Indigenous communities, but rather perpetuates an ongoing cycle of

inequality and dispossession. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission recently released a report with several calls to action to advance reconciliation in Canada, including reducing the number of Indigenous children in care and requesting an inquiry into the deaths of Murdered Indigenous women[37]. The analysis brought forth in this thesis serves as a fundamental challenge to the politics of recognition and helps contextualize ongoing dialogue about the deaths of children in care and Murdered and Missing Indigenous women as inextricably linked within a violent colonial heteropatriarchal system. In order to achieve systemic change, we must challenge the foundations of the settler colonial state and find alternatives systems of support and resistance. While going into care is in and of itself a traumatic experience, more should be done for youth who are already in the child welfare system to prevent further harm. Current institutional policies continue to distance youth from their families and communities by preventing youth's access to information, cultural programs and family members. These policies continue disconnect Indigenous youth from their culture and communities and serve to threaten Indigenous rights and sovereignty.

Youth have developed a distinctly urbanized form of Indigenous resistance that integrates contemporary elements, thus providing insightful commentary on academic discourses about Indigenous resistance. Much of the resistance documented here is founded on similar principles to what has already been reported in the literature, but it manifests itself in ways that are unexpected. I have drawn on Audra Simpson's body of work on Indigenous refusal and highlight how youth enact it through practices such as questioning and rejecting the legitimacy of the Canadian state, standing up against racism and negotiating interactions with institutions through silence, running away and confrontation. These acts are not merely reactionary or destructive, but are necessary for creating alternatives to settler colonialism. I have also drawn on how youth enact their own forms of Indigenous resurgence by fighting for their survival and well-being and remaining connected to Indigenous cultures and communities. I argued that youth bring up ways to resist settler colonialism that are not always recognized for their value and productivity, but

---

[37] Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (2015). Honouring the Truth Reconciling the Future: Summary of the Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. Retrieved from http://www.trc.ca/websites/trcinstitution/File/2015/Honouring_the_Truth_Reconciling_for_the_Future_July_23_2015.pdf

signify their remarkable strength and creativity in the face of colonial systems. Art is an important method for youth to envision and enact anticolonial resistance. This thesis complements the work of Audra Simpson and Glen Coulthard, by examining the location of cities and their role in the process of settler colonialism. I demonstrate how the city reflects larger processes of assimilation and displacement, but is also a hub for reclaiming Indigenous identities and spaces.

The collaborative methodology employed in this research is rare in the study of settler colonialism and presents many opportunities for critical renewal. From the outset, a central goal of this project was to integrate youth voices and perspectives into larger academic discussions about colonialism and resistance for Indigenous peoples. This wrongfully presumed that youth were not already participating in these discussions outside of academia. I remember being asked numerous times by individuals in the academy about how I would talk to youth without using academic jargon and high level concepts that they may not identify with such as colonialism. In practice, I found that youth could easily relate their personal experiences to historical and political processes using language such as racism, colonialism, stolen land, and injustice. The connection between residential schools and the child welfare system seemed clear to most of them due to having witnessed the impact of one and having experienced the other. All participants provided concrete examples of how these mechanisms play a role in their lives, bringing insight into different forms of violence and resistance that has not been paid due attention in academic and practitioner contexts.

The focus on art, expression and resistance to colonialism through collaboration was an effective way to engage with youth and create opportunities for solidarity. This project serves as a testament that productive alliances between groups, particularly those who share experiences with racism and displacement are possible. It created opportunities for supporting anticolonial struggles and building coalitions among racialized peoples. When meeting youth, I would share some of my personal experiences with racism in Canada and my reflections on witnessing injustice while doing research at the mental health agency. This approach enabled critiques of the child welfare system and was highly effective in creating discussion that youth wanted to participate in.

The approach presented here presents many challenges to anthropological ethics and how to envision mutually beneficial research relationships. While my leadership has brought many people together in meaningful ways, this was not a project conceived within Indigenous communities and at times reproduced colonizing tendencies within research. When seeking to bridge the gap between professionals and Indigenous youth by presenting this project, I became a representative for Indigenous youth, communicating their thoughts and experiences. Nevertheless, I believe that there are many possibilities emerging from this research to promote future alliances through critical dialogue, relationship building and support. Future work should continue to address state violence experienced by racialized peoples but also focus on establishing more equitable forms of collaboration and enhancing opportunities for racialized groups to work together, create and advance anti-colonial struggles.

REFERENCES

Adams, H. (1989). Prisons of Grass. Canada from a Native Point of View. Saskatoon: Fifth House Publishers.

Agnes, J., & Jack, A. S. (2006). Behind closed doors: Stories from the Kamloops Indian residential school. Theytus Books.

Ahmed, S. (2014). Willful Subjects. Duke University Press.

Ahmed, S. (2012). On being included: Racism and diversity in institutional life. Duke University Press.

Ahmed, S. (2000). Strange encounters: Embodied others in post-coloniality. New York: Routledge.

Alfred, G. R. (2005). Wasase: Indigenous pathways of action and freedom. Broadview Press.

Alfred, T. (1999). Peace, power and righteousness: An Indian manifesto.

Amsterdam, L. J. (2013). All the eagles and the ravens in the House Say Yeah: (Ab)Original hiphop, heritage, and love. American Indian Culture and Research Journal, 37(2), 53-72.

Archibald, J. A. (1993). Resistance to an unremitting process: Racism, curriculum and education in Western Canada. The imperial curriculum: Racial images and education in the British colonial experience, 93-107.

Asad, T. (1973). Anthropology and the colonial encounter (London, Ithaca Press).

Assembly of First Nations (2006). Leadership action plan on First Nations Child Welfare. Ottawa: Assembly of First Nations.

Auditor General of Canada Report. (2008). Chapter 4: First Nations Child and Family Services Program-Indian and Northern Affairs Canada. Office of the Auditor General. Retrieved from http://www.oag-bvg.gc.ca/internet/English/parl_oag_200805_04_e_30700.html

Beavon, D. J., Voyageur, C. J., & Newhouse, D. (Eds.). (2005). Hidden in plain sight: contributions of Aboriginal peoples to Canadian identity and culture (Vol. 1). University of Toronto Press.

Belanger, Y.D., Weasel Head, G., Awosoga, O. (2012). Assessing Urban Aboriginal Housing and Homelessness in Canada. Retrieved from http://www.homelesshub.ca/sites/default/files/Final_Belanger_Housing_and_Homeless_-_6_May_2012.pdf

Bergstrom, A., Cleary, L. M., & Peacock, T. D. (2003). The Seventh Generation: Native Students Speak about Finding the Good Path. ERIC/CRESS, PO Box 1348, Charleston, WV 25325-1348.

Bessarab, D. and F. Crawford. (2010). Aboriginal practitioners speak out: Contextualizing child protection interventions. Australian Social Work, 63(2), 179-193.

Bhabha, H. (1984). Of mimicry and man: the ambivalence of colonial discourse. October, 125-133.

Blackstock, C. (2012). "Child Welfare: Lessons from The Emperor's New Clothes." P. ix-xi in Awakening the spirit: Moving forward in Child Welfare- Voices from the prairies, edited by Fuchs, D., McKay, S. and I. Brown. Regina, Saskatchewan: Canada Plains Research Center.

Blackstock, C., Prakash, T., Loxley, J., and Wien, F. (2005). Wen:de: We are coming to the light of day. First Nations Child and Family Caring Society of Canada.

Blackstock, C., Trocmé, N., & Bennett, M. (2004). Child maltreatment investigations among Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal families in Canada. Violence Against Women, 10(8), 901-916.

Blackstock, C. (2003). "First Nations Child and Family Services: Restoring peace and harmony in First Nations communities." P. 331–42 in Child Welfare: Connecting Research, Policy, and Practice, edited by Kufeldt, K. and B. McKenzie. Waterloo, Ontario: Wilfred Laurier University Press.

Bottrell, D. (2007). Resistance, resilience and social identities: reframing 'problem youth' and the problem of schooling. Journal of Youth Studies, 10(5), 597-616.

Bourdieu, P. (1991). Language and symbolic power. Harvard University Press.

Brave Heart, M. Y. (2003). The historical trauma response among Natives and its relationship with substance abuse: A Lakota illustration. Journal of Psychoactive Drugs, 35, 7-13.

Bullock, R., Courtney, M. E., Parker, R., Sinclair, I., & Thoburn, J. (2006). Can the corporate state parent?. Children and Youth Services Review, 28(11), 1344-1358.

Campbell, M. (1973). Halfbreed (Vol. 816). University of Nebraska Press.

Carriere, J. (2010). Aski Awasis/Children of the earth: First Peoples speaking on adoption. Blackpoint, NS: Fernwood Publishing.

Carriere, J. (2008). Maintaining identities: The soul work of adoption and Aboriginal children. Pimatisiwin: A Journal of Aboriginal & Indigenous Community Health, 6(1).

Chapman, M. V., Wall, A., & Barth, R. P. (2004). Children's voices: The perceptions of children in foster care. American Journal of Orthopsychiatry,74(3), 293-304.

Chrisjohn, R, McKay, S., & Smith, A. (2014). Dying to please you: Indigenous suicide in contemporary Canada. Penticton: Theytus Books.

Comaroff, J., & Comaroff, J. (2003). Ethnography on an awkward scale Postcolonial anthropology and the violence of abstraction. Ethnography, 4(2), 147-179.

Coulthard, G. (2014). Red skin, white masks: rejecting the colonial politics of recognition. Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press.

Churchill, W. (2004). Kill the Indian, save the man: The genocidal impact of American Indian residential schools. San Francisco: City lights books.

Cruikshank, J. (2000). Social Life of Stories: Narrative and Knowledge in the Yukon Territory. UBC Press.

Davis, A.Y. (2011). Abolition democracy: Beyond empire, prisons, and torture. Seven Stories Press.

Daschuk, J. (2013). Clearing the plains: Disease, politics of starvation, and the loss of Aboriginal life (Vol. 65). University of Regina Press.

Deiter, C. (1999). From our mothers' arms: The intergenerational impact of residential schools in Saskatchewan. United Church Publishing House.

Biolsi, T., & Zimmerman, L. J. (Eds.). (1997). Indians and anthropologists: Vine Deloria, Jr., and the critique of anthropology. University of Arizona Press.

Deloria, V. (1988) Custer died for your sins: An Indian manifesto. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press).

Dingwall, R., Eekelaar, J. M., & Murray, T. (1984). Childhood as a social problem: a survey of the history of legal regulation. Journal of Law and Society, 207-232.

Donzelot, J., Hurley, R., & Deleuze, G. (1979). The policing of families (p. 88-89). New York: Pantheon Books.

Driskill, Q.L., Finley, C., Gilley, B.J., & Morgensen, S. (Eds.) (2011). Queer Indigenous studies: Critical interventions in theory, politics, and literature. Tucson: The University of Arizona Press

Dunaway, W. A. (2003). The African-American family in slavery and emancipation. Cambridge University Press.

Fanon, F. (1967). Black skin, white masks. 1952. C. L. Markmann (Ed.). New York.

Farmer, P. (1996). On suffering and structural violence: a view from below. Daedalus, 261-283.

Fisher, C. B., Hoagwood, K., Boyce, C., Duster, T., Frank, D. A., Grisso, T., ... & Zayas, L. H. (2002). Research ethics for mental health science involving ethnic minority children and youths. American Psychologist, 57(12), 1024.

Foucault, M. (1988). Madness and civilization: A history of insanity in the age of reason. Vintage.

Foucault, M. (1984). Space, knowledge and power. The Foucault Reader, 239, 256.

Foucault, M. (1979). Discipline and punish: the birth of the prison. Discipline and punish: the birth of the prison.

Fournier, S., & Crey, E. (1997). Stolen from Our Embrace: The Abduction of First Nations Children and the Restoration of Aboriginal Communities. Douglas & McIntyre Ltd., 1615 Venables Street, Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada V5L 2H1 (cloth: ISBN-55054-117-X, $29.95; paper: ISBN-55054-661-9, $19.95).

Gaztambide-Fernández, R. A. (2012). Decolonization and the pedagogy of solidarity. Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society, 1(1).

Gilchrist, K. (2010). "Newsworthy" Victims? Exploring differences in Canadian local press coverage of missing/murdered Aboriginal and White women. Feminist media studies, 10(4), 373-390.

Giroux, H. A. (1992). Border crossings: Cultural workers and the politics of education. Psychology Press.

Globe and Mail. (2015). Manitoba foster children still being left in 'last resort' hotels. http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/national/manitoba-foster-children-still-being-left-in-last-resort-hotels/article23576306/

Gray, R. (2011). Visualizing pedagogy and power with Urban Native Youth: Exposing the legacy of the Indian Residential School system Canadian Journal of Native Education, 34(1), 9-103.

Grimm, J., Grimm, W., & Lang, A. (1884). Grimm's household tales: with the author's notes (Vol. 2). G. Bell.

Haig-Brown, C. (1988). Resistance and renewal: Surviving the Indian residential school. Arsenal pulp press.

Hamilton, S. S., & Armando, J. (2008). Oppositional defiant disorder. American family physician, 78(7), 861-866.

Harding, R. (2010). The Demonization of Aboriginal Child Welfare Authorities in the News. Canadian Journal of Communication, 35(1).

Harding, R. (2009). News Reporting on Aboriginal Child Welfare: Discourses of White Guilt, Reverse Racism, and Failed Policy. Canadian Social Work Review/Revue canadienne de service social, 25-41.

Hedican, E. J. (2008). Applied Anthropology in Canada: Understanding Aboriginal Issues. University of Toronto Press.

Hill, G. (2013). Afterward: Looking back to Sakahàn. In G. Hill, C. Hopkins & C. Lalonde (Eds.), Sakahàn: International Indigenous art. Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada.

Hunt, S. (2014). Ontologies of Indigeneity: the politics of embodying a concept. Cultural geographies, 21(1), 27-32.

Jacobs, M. D. (2005). Maternal Colonialism: White Women and Indigenous Child Removal in the American West and Australia, 1880-1940. The Western Historical Quarterly, 453-476.

Jahnke, H. T., & Gillies, A. (2012). Indigenous Innovations in Qualitative Research Method: Investigating the Private World of Family Life. International Journal of Qualitative Methods, 11(4).

Jaine, L. (1995). Residential schools: The stolen years. University Extension Press, Extension Division, University of Saskatchewan, 1995.

Jeffrey, D. (2009). Meeting here and now: Reflections on racial and cultural difference in social work encounters. In S. Strega & J. Carrière (Eds.), Walking this path together: Anti-racist and anti-oppressive child welfare practice (pp. 45–61). Halifax: Fernwood Publishing

Johnston, P. (1983). Native children and the child welfare system. Toronto, Ontario, Canada: Canadian Council on Social Development.

Kane, E. (2010). Trickster: An anthropological memoir. University of Toronto Press.

Kawash, S. (1998). The homeless body. Public Culture, 10(2), 319-339.

Kesey, K. (2002). One flew over the cuckoo's nest. Penguin.

Kim, C. Y., Losen, D. J., & Hewitt, D. T. (2010). The school-to-prison pipeline: Structuring legal reform. NYU Press.

Kimelman, E. C., & Manitoba Dept. of Community Services and Corrections. (1985). No quiet place. Manitoba Community Services.

Kino-nda-niimi Collective. (2014). The Winter We Danced: Voices From the Past, the Future, and the Idle No More Movement. ARP Publishing.

Kirby, K. M., & Subjectivity, R. M. (1996). Cartographic vision and the limits of politics. Body/Space: Destabilising Geographies of Gender and Sexuality, 45-55.

Kline, M. (1993). Complicating the ideology of motherhood: Child welfare law and First Nations women. Queen's Law Journal, 18(2), 306-342.

Knockwood, I., & Thomas, G. (1992). Out of the Depths: The Experiences of Mi'kmaw Children at the Indian Residential School at Shubenacadie, Nova Scotia. Roseway Publishing Ltd., RR# 1, Lockeport, Nova Scotia, Canada B0T 1L0.

Kovach, M. E. (2010). Indigenous methodologies: Characteristics, conversations, and contexts. University of Toronto Press.

Lassiter, L. E. (2005). The Chicago guide to collaborative ethnography. University of Chicago Press.

Lawrence, B. (2004). " Real" Indians and others: mixed-blood urban Native peoples and indigenous nationhood. U of Nebraska Press.

Lawrence, B. (2003). Gender, race, and the regulation of native identity in Canada and the United States: An overview. Hypatia, 18(2), 3-31.

LeFrancois, B. A. (2013). The psychiatrization of our children, or, an autoethnographic narrative of perpetuating First Nations genocide through 'benevolent' institutions. Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society, 2(1).

Littlechild, G. (2012). George Littlechild: The Spirit Giggles Within. Heritage House Publishing Co.

Lomawaima, K. T. (1993). Domesticity in the federal Indian schools: The power of authority over mind and body. American Ethnologist, 20(2), 227-240.

Long, M., & Sephton, R. (2011). Rethinking the "best interests" of the child: Voices from Aboriginal child and family welfare practitioners. Australian Social Work, 64(1), 96-112.

Lorde, A. (2003). The master's tools will never dismantle the master's house. Feminist postcolonial theory: A reader, 25, 27.

Lorde, A. (1988). A burst of light: Essays. Firebrand Books.

Marcus, G. E., & Fischer, M. M. (1999). Anthropology as cultural critique: An experimental moment in the human sciences. University of Chicago Press.

Martineau, J., & Ritskes, E. (2014). Fugitive indigeneity: Reclaiming the terrain of decolonial struggle through Indigenous art. Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society, 3(1).

McGillivray, A. (1995). Therapies of freedom: The colonization of Aboriginal childhood. University of British Columbia.

McKenzie, B. (2002). Block funding child maintenance in First Nations child and family services: A policy review. Unpublished paper prepared for Montreal: Kahnawake Shakotiia'takenhas Community Services.

Menzies, P. (2008). Developing an Aboriginal healing model for intergenerational trauma. International Journal of Health Promotion and Education, 46(2), 41-48.

Miller, B. G. (2001). The problem of justice: Tradition and law in the Coast Salish world. U of Nebraska Press.

Miller, J. R. (2000). Skyscrapers hide the heavens: A history of Indian-white relations in Canada. University of Toronto Press.

Milloy, J. S. (1999). A national crime: The Canadian government and the residential school system, 1879 to 1986. Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press.

Miss Chief Rocka (2013). The artist… http://misschiefrocka.wix.com/bling Last accessed April, 2015.

Mitchell, L. M. (2006). Child-centered? Thinking critically about children's drawings as a visual research methods.Visual Anthropology Review, 22(1), 60-73.

Monture-Angus, P. A. (2008). Women's Words: Power, Identity, and Indigenous Sovereignty. Canadian Woman Studies, 26(3).

Monture-Angus, P. (2002). The experience of fiduciary relationships: Canada's First Nations and the Crown. In, In whom we trust: A force or fiduciary relationship? Law Society of Canada (October), 151–174

Monture-Angus, P. (1999). Journeying Forward: Dreaming First Nations' Independence Fernwood Publishing,

Monture-Angus, P., & Stiegelbauer, S. M. (1996). Thunder in My Soul: A Mohawk Woman Speaks. Resources for Feminist Research, 25(1/2), 52.

Morantz, T. (2002). White Man's Gonna Getcha: The Colonial Challenge to the Crees in Quebec (Vol. 30). McGill-Queen's Press-MQUP.

Morgensen, S. L. (2011). Spaces between us: Queer settler colonialism and indigenous decolonization. University of Minnesota Press.

Mutua, K., & Swadener, B. B. (Eds.). (2004). Decolonizing research in cross-cultural contexts: Critical personal narratives. SUNY press.

Nagel, J. (1997). American Indian ethnic renewal: Red power and the resurgence of identity and culture. Oxford University Press.

Navarro, J. (2014). Solarize-ing Native hip-hop: Native feminist land ethics and cultural resistance. Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society, 3(1).

Navia, D., Newman, J., Kontrimas, M. (2013). Understanding Running Away Through the Lived Experience of Youth in Care. Journal for the Services to Children and Families Vol. 6, p.8-16.

O'Neil, J., Reading, J. & Leader, A. (1998). Changing the relations of surveillance: The development of a discourse of resistance in Aboriginal epidemiology. Human Organization, 57, 230-237.

Parker, R. (1980). Caring for separated children. London: MacMillan

Patterson, M. L., Moniruzzaman, A., & Somers, J. M. (2015). History of foster care among homeless adults with mental illness in Vancouver, British Columbia: a precursor to trajectories of risk. BMC psychiatry, 15(1), 32.

Pinto, A.D. & Smylie, J. (2013). Chapter 6: Indigenous health and ethics: lessons for global health. In A.D. Pinto & R.E.G. Upshur (Eds.) An Introduction to Global Health Ethics. Abingdon, UK: Routledge (Taylor & Francis).

Razack, S. (2015). Dying from Improvement: Inquests and Inquiries into Indigenous Deaths in Custody. University of Toronto Press.

Razack, S. (2014). "It Happened More Than Once": Freezing Deaths in Saskatchewan. Canadian Journal of Women and the Law/Revue Femmes et Droit, 26(1), 51-80. Gendered Racial Violence and Spatialized Justice: The Murder of Pamela George

Reid, M. (2005). First Nations women workers' speak, write and research back: child welfare and decolonizing stories. First Peoples Child & Family Review, 2(1), 21-40.

Regan, P. (2010). Unsettling the settler within: Indian residential schools, truth telling, and reconciliation in Canada. UBC Press.

Roos, L. E., Distasio, J., Bolton, S. L., Katz, L. Y., Afifi, T. O., Isaak, C., ... & Sareen, J. (2014). A history in-care predicts unique characteristics in a homeless population with mental illness. Child abuse & neglect, 38(10), 1618-1627.

Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples. (1996). Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples. Ottawa: Indian and Northern Affairs, Canada.

Scott, J. C. (2008). Weapons of the weak: Everyday forms of peasant resistance. Yale University Press.

Simpson, A. (2014). Mohawk interruptus: Political life across the borders of settler states. Duke University Press.

Simpson, A. (2014b). The Chiefs Two Bodies: Theresa Spence and the Gender of Settler Sovereignty. Keynote at Unsettling Conversations: Unmaking Racism and Colonialisms in Canada. October 17th, 2014.

Simpson, A. (2011). On ethnographic refusal: indigeneity,'voice' and colonial citizenship. Junctures: The Journal for Thematic Dialogue, (9).

Simpson, L. (2013). Islands of Decolonial Love. Arbeiter Ring Publishing.

Simpson, L. (2008). Lighting the eighth fire: The liberation, resurgence, and protection of
      Indigenous nations. Arbeiter Ring Publishing.

Sinclair, R. (2007). Identity lost and found: Lessons from the sixties scoop. First Peoples Child
      & Family Review, 3(1).

Sinha, V., Trocme, N., Fallon, B, MacLaurin, B., Fast, E., Thomas, S., et al. 2011. Kiskisik
      Awasiak: Remember the Children. Understanding the Overrepresentation of First Nations
      Children in the Child Welfare System. Ontario: Assembly of First Nations

Sium, A., & Ritskes, E. (2013). Speaking truth to power: Indigenous storytelling as an act of
      living resistance. Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society,2(1).

Smith, A. (2014). Without the Right to Exist: the Settler Colonial Logics of National Security
      Law. Plenary at Unsettling Conversations: Unmaking Racism and Colonialisms in
      Canada. October 17th, 2014.

Smith, A. (2006). Heteropatriarchy and the three pillars of white supremacy: Rethinking women
      of color organizing. In INCITE! Women of Color Against Violence (Eds.), Color of
      violence: The INCITE! Anthology (pp. 66–73). Cambridge, MA: South End Press.

Smith, A. (2005). Conquest: sexual violence and American Indian genocide (p. 1). Cambridge,
      MA: South End Press.

Smith, L. T. (1999). Decolonizing methodologies: Research and indigenous peoples. Zed books.

Spivak, G. (2003). Subaltern studies. Deconstruction: Critical Concepts in Literary and Cultural
      Studies, 4, 220.

Srivastava, A. (1995). Postcolonialism and Its Discontents. Ariel, 26(1).1-17.

Taylor, C. (1994). The politics of recognition. Multiculturalism: Examining the politics of
      recognition, 25, 25.

Thobani, S. (2007). Exalted subjects: Studies in the making of race and nation in Canada.
      University of Toronto Press.

Timpson, J. B. (1990). Indian and Native special status in Ontario's Child Welfare legislation:
      An overview of the social, legal and political context. Canadian Social Work
      Review/Revue canadienne de service social, 49-68.

Townsend-Gault. C. (1992). Kinds of knowing. In Land Spirit Power: First Nations at the
      National Gallery of Canada. Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada.

Trocmé, N., Knoke, D., & Blackstock, C. (2004). Pathways to the overrepresentation of Aboriginal children in Canada's child welfare system. Social Service Review, 78(4), 577-600.

Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. (2015). What we have learned: Principles of Truth and Reconciliation. Retrieved from http://www.trc.ca/websites/trcinstitution/File/2015/Findings/Principles%20of%20Truth%20and%20Reconciliation.pdf

Tuck, E., & Yang, K. W. (2012). Decolonization is not a metaphor. Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society, 1(1).

United Nations (2003). "Press Release: Committee on the rights of the child holds a day of discussion on the rights of Indigenous Children." Press release. United Nations, Geneva. September 19.

Ursel, J. (1992). Private Lives, Public Policy: 100 Years of State Intervention in the Family. Women's Press.

Walia, H. (2013). Undoing Border Imperialism. Oakland: AK Press, 314.

Williams, J., Copperman, J., & LeFrançois, B. A. (2001). Mental health services that work for women: Survey findings. Canterbury, U.K.: Tizard Centre, University of Kent

Wilson, S. (2008). Research is ceremony: Indigenous research methods. Fernwood Pub.

Wolf, E. R. (2010). Europe and the People without History. University of California Press.

Wolfe, P. (2006). Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native. Journal of Genocide Research, 8(4), 387-409.

Wong, R. (2008). Decolonizasian: Reading Asian and first nations relations in literature. Canadian Literature, 199, 158-180.

APPENDICES

Recruitment poster

Select youth collaborator biographies

Youth were approached to write biographies for conference presentations and art exhibits and then for inclusion in this thesis. Each of the biographies that follow was written by a youth collaborator and highlights their background, accomplishments and aspirations.

Tia Ledesma is 25 years old from Siksika Nation. She is a mother of two children. Tia plans to continue to pursue her education and one day work in youth advocacy.

Virginia Red Crow is 19 years old from the Blood reserve. She has grown up in Calgary her whole life and is a recent graduate from Father Lacombe high school. She has had the same job throughout school and wants to attend University of Calgary to pursue a career as a registered nurse.

Tyler Blackface is 22 years old from the Siksika Nation. He is sponsored for skateboarding and spends his time painting. He grew up in foster care since he was 3 years old. He has faced several struggles in life such as alcoholism and homelessness.

Melody Lynn Berland is 24 years old from Cold Lake First Nations. She was raised in Calgary by a single mother and grew up in the struggle, being in the child welfare system and in and out of jail. She works hard to change the vicious cycle for her children. She enjoys cooking and poetry.

Tyler Ironstand is of Ojibway descent from Tootinaowaziibeeng Nation and considers himself a proud First Nation. He grew up in the child welfare system and was in and out of foster homes and group homes. He loves reading and writing lyrics.

Angela Miracle Gladue represents Papaschase and Frog Lake First Nation. She has been blessed to be able to perform, teach and travel to many cities throughout Canada, The US, Asia, Australia, and Europe with various First Nation and Hip-Hop performing groups. Her passion is promoting living healthy lifestyles through dance and culture.

Sarah Scout is an active Nitsitapi writer and Indigenous artivist. From 2000 – 2002 she attended Lethbridge Community College where she studied print journalism and communication arts. Her work has been published in print mediums such as The Endeavour, The Lethbridge Herald, Say and Beatroute Magazine and Lastrealindians.com. From November 2006 – February 2009 she was the managing editor of New Tribe Magazine. Founding the Aboriginal Writer's Circle Calgary in 2007, Sarah created this group for Aboriginal writers, authors and storytellers

to come together in celebration and exploration of the written word and oral storytelling tradition until its retirement in 2014. In her spare time, she also creates and distributes her own independent zines which document personal anecdote, stories, life writing experience and poetry in a mixed collage of black and white photography and experimental graphic design. Winner of the Royal Bank of Canada Aboriginal Student [two year] Scholarship in 2009, Sarah studied at the University of Calgary in pursuit of her BA in English. She currently is writing her first 'life writing' novel "Incomplete Indian: The Indigenous Life Writings of Sarah Scout".

Project outline for youth

This project focuses on who you are and the story of your life. We want you to play the role of storyteller about your own life -- to construct the story of your own past, present, and what you see as your future. We also want you to reflect on communities you are a part of, your identity and views about social justice. We would like you to use words and art (drawing, photography, video, poetry, sculpture, dance, music, crafts, etc.) as a way of expressing yourself. For each art piece, please add an explanation about how it represents who you are, how you see the world and your experiences. You do not need to focus on every aspect of your life and perspective, just focus on what you believe to be important and want to share.

Theme	Guiding Questions: We would like to touch on these areas when we talk to you. Feel free to guide the conversation to other areas that you think are relevant.	Creative Exercises: You are **not** limited to these, let us know if you have other ideas. You can make as many pieces for each section as you want. You can also use art you have made before.
Identity and Culture	1. Tell us about yourself a. What do you think are your best qualities? b. What do you like to do with your spare time? c. What makes you happy? d. What would you say are some key aspects of your identity? e. Do you have a set of values or beliefs that you live by? i. Where do those values come from? 2. What do you think are the most important things in life? 3. What role does culture play in your life? 4. Would you say being Aboriginal/Native/Indigenous is a key aspect of your identity? a. Why or why not?	• Make pieces that help explain to someone who you are and what is important to you • Make pieces that help explain to someone what being Aboriginal means to you

	5. How would you describe to someone how being Aboriginal/Native has influenced your life?
	6. What does it mean for you to be connected to your native identity?
	    b. What has helped you feel connected?
	  i. What has helped you feel disconnected?	

Community	7. Who are important people in your life?
	  a. Can you tell me about them?
	  b. How have they influenced you?
	8. Tell me about your family
	  a. Where are they from? Where do they live?
	  b. What is your relationship with them like?
	  c. Can you tell me a story about _____ that sticks out in your mind?
	  d. Do you have other people that you are not related to that you consider family?
	    i. How are they important to you?
	    ii. Can you tell me a story about _____ that sticks out in your mind?
	9. Can you tell me about individuals that have been a negative influence in your life?
		• Make pieces that represent one or more of the individuals that has had an impact on your life
		• Make pieces that represent memories of individuals that have had an impact on your life

Life History	10. Where were you born?
	11. Where did you grow up?
	12. Can you tell me about your childhood?
	13. What are some memories that stick out in your mind throughout your life?
	  a. Looking back on your life so far, do any positive events or periods stand out? Can you describe them to me?
	  b. Looking back on your life so far, do any difficult events or periods stand out? Can you describe them to me?
	  c. Can you tell me about a turning point in your life?
	  d. What is the hardest thing you've ever had to do?
	14. Where do you see yourself in the future?
	  a. What would you like to do?
	  b. Where would you like to be?
		• Make a storyboard for a trailer of a movie about your life, using pieces of art to represent key scenes
		
		• Represent how you were before the key event in your life and how you were after
		
		• Represent different memories that we have discussed

	c. What challenges do you see ahead? d. What aspects of your future are you hopeful about?	• Make art pieces representing your future

Place and Displacement	15. Can you tell me about all of the places you have lived?
	   a. Can you describe them?
	   b. What are some memories that stick out in your mind from here?
	   c. Is there anything that reminds you of that place?
	   d. Why did you go from _____ to _____?
	   e. How did you feel about moving from _____ to _____?
	   f. What are some memories that stick out in your mind about moving
	   g. Is there a place or time in your life that you miss/ feel nostalgic about?
	16. What events would you say led to you coming into care/ different placements?
	   a. How did you feel about going there?
	   b. Can you tell me what it was like to live in care?
	   c. What are some memories that stick out in your mind from here?
	   d. Did you consider those places home?
	   e. How did you feel about leaving care?
		• Represent a place that has been important in your life
		• Represent the impact/meaning of moving away

Individual/Family Injustice	17. Can you tell me about some of the issues that you have faced in your life?
	   a. Can you tell me about your experience with this issue?
	   b. How has this issue impacted your life?
	   c. What do you think causes _____?
	18. Have you ever been given a negative label?
	   a. What does that mean to you?
	   b. Do you tell others about this experience?
	19. Do you have any family members with similar issues?
	20. Can you tell me about situations in your life that you thought were unfair?
	   a. How did you respond to that? How did others respond?
	   b. Why do you think that happened?
	   c. What could change to help prevent that from happening in the future?
		• Represent what these issues mean to you
		• Represent how you have been impacted by this issues, or how you have changed in relation to these experiences

	21. Can you tell me about situations in the lives of people you care about that you thought were unfair?
	   a. How did they respond to that? How did others respond?
	   b. Why do you think that happened?
	   c. What could change to help prevent that from happening in the future?	

Social Justice and resistance	22. What do you think are issues that affect/have affected Aboriginal people?
	23. Is there anything that you think needs to change?
	24. Do you think non-Aboriginal people understand Aboriginal people and their culture and values?
	25. Do you think non-Aboriginal people respect Aboriginal people and their culture and values?
	26. Have you ever felt discriminated against? Can you tell me about that time?
	27. Do you know anyone who has been discriminated against?
	28. Why do you think Aboriginal people are:
	   a. Over-represented in the child welfare system
	   b. Over-represented in the prison system
	   c. More likely to be homeless
	   d. More likely to suffer from severe health conditions like HIV, diabetes, TB, etc?
	   e. More likely to commit suicide?
	29. What do you think needs to change?
	30. What do you think makes Aboriginal people that you know strong?
	31. Do you have any role models who are fighting for positive change in their lives/their communities?
	32. How do you fight for a better future for yourself/your communities?
		• Represent these issues
		• Represent the impact of these issues
		• Represent ways to resist these issues
		• Represent the change you would like to see
		• Represent how people or groups are fighting for change

Editing, wrap-up	33. How you would like to share the information we have created and with whom? 34. How would you like to present that information? a. Sorting pieces, editing 35. What are the top themes that emerge? 36. How did you find the experience of participating in the project? Is there anything you would change?	

Presentations

Event	Date	Type	Venue	Location	Link
Under Western Skies Conference	September 12th, 2014	Presentation	Mount Royal University	Calgary	http://skies.mtroyal.ca/
Treaty 7 Management Corporation Health Information Session	September 29th, 2014	Presentation	Coast Plaza Hotel	Calgary	
Guest Lecture for ANTH 303: Business in Cultural Context	October 7th, 2014	Presentation	University of Calgary	Calgary	
UAKN Western Regional Research Centre Workshop	October 16th, 2014	Presentation	University of Northern British Columbia	Prince George	
Alberta Housing and Homelessness Research Strategy Launch	October 27th, 2014	Plenary presentation	Radisson Hotel Edmonton	Edmonton	http://www.research4children.com/theme/common/page.cfm?i=10002282
Guest Lecture for ANTH 213: Contemporary Aboriginal issues in Canada	October 30th, 2014	Presentation	University of Calgary	Calgary	
Honouring Our Knowledge Gifts: An Aboriginal Research Forum	November 13-14th, 2014	Plenary presentation	River Cree Marriott Hotel and Casino	Enoch Nation	http://www.research4children.com/theme/common/page.cfm?i=10002111
Guest Lecture for NTST 0130: Native Studies	November 26th, 2014	Presentation	Mount Royal University	Calgary	
Guest lecture for INDG 401: Research in selected topics in international Indigenous studies	November 27th, 2014	Presentation	University of Calgary	Calgary	
Anarky Lecture series	December 3rd, 2014	Presentation	University of Calgary	Calgary	
Presentation to staff group	January 6th, 2015	Presentation	Office of the Child and Youth Advocate	Calgary	
Trauma Informed Edmonton Conference	March 5th,, 2015		Westin Edmonton Hotel	Edmonton	http://www.traumainformededmonton.ca/

8th Fire Gathering	March 15th, , 2015	Plenary presentation	University of Calgary	Calgary	http://www.8thfiregathering.ca/
This Is My City Arts Festival	April 17th-25th, , 2015	Art exhibit	Art Box Gallery	Calgary	http://www.thisismycitycalgary.ca/
Sovereignties and Colonialisms: Resisting Racism, Extraction and Dispossession Conference	May 2nd, , 2015	Presentation	York University	Toronto	https://www.criticalethnicstudies.org/content/conference-information

Publications and media coverage

Venue	Title	Authors	Date	Link
Alberta Centre for Child, Family and Community Research (ACCFCR)	Uncovering colonial legacies: Indigenous youth, homelessness and child welfare (dis)placements	Daniela Navia	October 30th, 2014	https://vimeo.com/110510379
ACCFCR	Uncovering colonial legacies Indigenous youth in child welfare	Daniela Navia, Levi First Charger, Tia Ledesma, Angela Gladue, Dallas White Eagle, Virginia Red Crow, Dylan Desjarlais	March 23rd, 2015	https://vimeo.com/album/3136558/video/123032507
First Nations Child & Family Caring Society of Canada Newsletter	Youth on film	Melisa Brittain	March 29th, 2015	http://www.shannensdream.org/sites/default/files/38108%20newsletter%20spring2015%20v7f.pdf
Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council Youtube Channel	Uncovering colonial legacies | Daniela Navia	Daniela Navia and Melisa Brittain	April 1st, 2015	https://youtu.be/cM_kU_Iio0c
Obrien Institute of Public Health	Using art to decipher the effects of child welfare on Aboriginal youth	Pablo Fernandez	April 17th, 2015	http://obrieniph.ucalgary.ca/Voices%20of%20Indigenous%20Youth%20in%20Child%20Welfare%20disPlacements

Metro News	Aboriginal youth share haunting stories of childhood displacement at Calgary art exhibit	Anna Brooks	April 23rd, 2015	http://metronews.ca/news/calgary/1349008/aboriginal-youth-share-haunting-stories-of-childhood-displacement-at-calgary-art-exhibit/
Utoday	Researchers use art to create picture of indigenous youth in child welfare	Pablo Fernandez	April 23rd, 2015	http://www.ucalgary.ca/utoday/issue/2015-04-23/researchers-use-art-create-picture-indigenous-youth-child-welfare
Peak Magazine	Uncovering colonial legacies: Indigenous youth In child welfare (dis)placements	Daniela Navia, Tyler Blackface, Angela Gladue, Tia Ledesma, Levi First Charger, Rita Henderson	April 25th, 2015	http://guelphpeak.org/feature/2015/04/uncovering-colonial-legacies-indigenous-youth-in-child-welfare-displacements/
Art Bridges	Uncovering Colonial Legacies: Artwork by Indigenous Youth in Child Welfare (dis)Placements (Calgary)	Cora Rae-Silk	May 25th, 2015	http://artbridges.ca/blog/en/2015/05/uncovering-colonial-legacies-artwork-by-indigenous-youth-in-child-welfare-displacements-calgary/#
City of Calgary	Chief David Crowchild and Aboriginal Youth Awards	Tina Garstad	June 18th, 2015	http://www.calgarycitynews.com/2015/06/chief-david-crowchild-and-aboriginal.html
Calgary Sun	Calgary Aboriginal youth recognized at Chief David Crowchild Memorial Awards	Laura Booth	June 19th, 2015	http://www.calgarysun.com/2015/06/19/calgary-aboriginal-youth-recognized-with-chief-david-crowchild-memorial-awards
Utoday	Award-winning project tells the stories of Indigenous children in care	Jennifer Allford	June 30th, 2015	https://www.ucalgary.ca/utoday/issue/2015-06-30/award-winning-project-tells-stories-indigenous-children-care