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Re-Storying the Past: Transforming the White Settler Colonial Stories that Formed Us

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Re-Storying the Past: Transforming the White Settler Colonial Stories that Formed Us

by

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A THESIS

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Abstract

In this study, I explore the ways Settler¹ nurse educators understand their identity within the context of Canada's colonial narrative. I provide a generative space for critical reflectivity on my own social location through creative, embodied explorations of my Settler-colonial story and experiences, Indigenous historical accounts, and dialogical engagement with Canada's socio-historical configuration as a Settler nation-state. I consider the ways Whiteness², (DiAngelo, 2018a), Settler identity (Tuck & Yang, 2012; Wolfe, 2006), and Settler colonial logics act as barriers to transforming Settler understanding of Canada's Settler colonial history and Indigenous sovereignty (Donald, 2009). Using Indigenous Métissage as a research sensibility, I engage in narrative and embodied practices to better understand and transform my relationship to self, land, and Canada's colonial history. Through braided stories of place, practices, and historical perspectives, I examine the impact that Camp Chief Hector had on my White settler formation and its exclusionary and exploitative relationship with the Stoney Nakoda Nation. I consider a path towards reconciliation; one created by attending to respect and reverence, reciprocity, kinship relationality, and treaty responsibility. By thinking through my lived experiences as an entry point to engage Settler identity, I tell a more truthful account of Canadian history and of the current state of how Settler colonial logics influence the relationship between Settlers and Indigenous people.

¹ I capitalize the term Settler because I consider it an uncomfortable, yet foundational element of my identity that I need to grapple with and better understand. I centre my Settler identity to better understand how it influences my relationship to self, land, Canadian history, and Indigenous peoples. I seek transformation.

² Because of White dominance in Canadian society, White Canadians have the choice of being (or seeing themselves as) unracialized and separate from race. I choose to capitalize White and Whiteness to challenge this freedom, to counter racial invisibility.

Key words: White settler identity, settler colonial logics, transformative practices, truth and reconciliation, kinship relationality, treaty responsibility, Indigenous Métissage.

Preface

This thesis is original, unpublished, independent work by the author, H. Bensler. The self-study reported in Chapters 4-6 was covered by Ethics Certificate number REB21-0628, issued by the University of Calgary Conjoint Faculties Research Ethics Board for the project “Re-Storying the Past: Transforming the White Settler Colonial Stories that Formed Us in Nursing Education” on June 23, 2021.

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To my parents, the greatest gift you ever gave to me was a love of learning and education. I never knew it was an option *not* to go to university. Thank you for cheering me on.

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And to Evan, my husband: Never will I be able to express the depth of my gratitude for all you have given me. Your love and friendship carried me through this, and I could not have done it without you. Thank you, my love.

I also want to acknowledge the place I call home – the city of Calgary, which is in the traditional territory of the Siksika, the Piikani, the Kainai, the Tsuut’ina and the Stoney Nakoda First Nations. It is also, home to the Métis Nation of Alberta, Region 3. I am a Treaty person.

Dedication

To Edwin, Michelle, Elizabeth, and Josh.

I trust this is one part of doing better.

Table of Contents

Abstract	ii
Preface	iv
Acknowledgements	v
Dedication	vi
Table of Figures	x
Epigraph	xi
Chapter 1	1
Introduction to the Inquiry	1
Background and Context	2
Statement of the Research Problem	5
Purpose of the Study	5
Research Questions	6
Rationale and Significance	7
Theoretical Framework and Research Design	8
Researcher Assumptions	9
Dissertation Organization	10
Definition of Key Terminology	10
Chapter 2	12
A Review of the Relevant Literature	12
White Settler Colonialism	13
Settler Identity	14
Colonial Myths	14
Settler Colonial Logics	16
White Settler Colonialism	17
Whiteness	18
White Supremacy	20
Cultural Hegemony	21
White Privilege	22
White Fragility	23
White Consciousness	23
Settler Moves to Innocence	24
Pedagogy of the Oppressed	26
Conscientization	27
Cultural Invasion	28
Cultural Synthesis	28
Solidarity	29
Enacting Pedagogy of the Oppressed	29
A Better Way Forward	30
Locating Colonialism in a Shared Story	31
Decolonizing Stories	31
Ceremony and Cultural Practices	32
A Renewed Relationship	34
Rooted in Place	34
Relating to Land	35
Re-Storying	35
Conclusion	36
Chapter 3	37

Research Practice	37
Introduction	37
Purpose Statement	38
Paradigmatic Orientation	38
Research Approach	41
Indigenous Métissage.....	42
<i>Métissage as Braiding</i>	43
<i>Artifacts</i>	44
<i>Place</i>	45
<i>Ethical Relationality</i>	45
Hermeneutic Imagination	46
Self as Research Participant	47
Research Positionality	48
Research Setting.....	48
Practicing Indigenous Métissage	49
Data Generation	49
Gathering Evidence	50
<i>Documents</i>	50
<i>Field Notes and Journaling</i>	50
Document Analysis.....	50
<i>Field Notes</i>	51
Story Writing	51
Three Strands	52
<i>Strand One: Aoksisowaato’p</i>	53
<i>Strand Two: Life Writing</i>	53
<i>Strand Three: Cultural and Historical Perspectives</i>	54
<i>Preparing to Braid</i>	55
<i>Braiding the Texts</i>	55
Criteria for Evaluation	56
Ethical Considerations	57
Potential Risks or Benefits to Self.....	58
Limitations and Delimitations	58
Limitations.....	58
Delimitations	59
Conclusion	60
Chapter 4	62
Braiding Camp	62
Place: The Invitation	65
Practices: The Erasure Begins	67
A Colonial Project: Playing Indian.....	68
Sense-Making: Playing Indian	70
Place: My Return	73
Entering the Sanctum.....	75
The Hope That Was Camp Chief Hector	76
Sense-Making: An Address.....	77
Place: Meeting Chief Hector’s Great Granddaughter	80
Coming to Belong.....	82
Stolen Lands	85

Sense-Making: Erasure	88
Towards Reconciliation	91
Chapter 5	93
Towards Reconciliation	93
Respect and Reverence.....	95
<i>One With the Land</i>	95
<i>Disruption</i>	97
<i>Towards Ethical Engagement</i>	100
Reciprocity.....	102
Responsibility.....	104
Kinship Relationality.....	107
<i>What It Is Not</i>	108
Chapter 6	111
Making White Man’s Sons Better Than Their Forefathers	111
Treaty Responsibility.....	112
A Better Way.....	115
We are all Treaty People.....	116
Reconciliation.....	117
References	125

Table of Figures

Figure 1..... 12

Epigraph

I don't know if I can write from a place that imagines Indigeneity in North America with a richness, and a fullness, and an honesty that would do it justice, but I know I can write from a place that imagines a different ethic of relation that would require forms of transformation that would make Indigenous people present to me.

—Rinaldo Walcott, in a podcast conversation with Eve Tuck

Chapter 1

Introduction to the Inquiry

In 2015, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) released its final report and Calls to Action specific to sectors of society that were complicit in the harms done to Indigenous people in Canada. In response to the health sector Call to Action #24, nursing schools were required to provide a course dealing with Indigenous-specific content on colonialism, Indigenous health, cultural safety, and anti-racism. Unfortunately, few nursing programs were prepared to enact these changes. Nursing education is deeply influenced by White dominance (Bell, 2020) and Eurocentric knowledge systems (Kennedy et al., 2020) which act as significant barriers to change. Regan (2010) suggests non-Indigenous Canadians maintain a version of history that upholds White Settler-colonial dominance and maintains Indigenous peoples' invisibility from Canadian consciousness. From this standpoint, non-Indigenous educators resist framing Indigenous health inequities as an ongoing colonial problem that requires nurses to enact individual and systemic change (Symenuk et al., 2020). However, to address the TRC Calls to Action, non-Indigenous Canadians, or Settlers, must counter this historical amnesia that denies the harms done by colonialism and pathologizes Indigenous peoples (Regan, 2010). Due to the urgency for nursing programs to enact changes in their curriculum, White Settler nurse educators have failed to undertake the work required to uncover their complicity in colonialism (Symenuk, 2020).

To repair this inherited colonial divide, Papaschase Cree Scholar Dwayne Donald (2009; 2012; 2021) calls for a reframing of historical and contemporary interactions between Settlers and Indigenous people based on a renewed ethical framework and a reimagined relationship while Regan (2010) urges non-Indigenous Settlers to “restory” the dominant-culture version of history to make decolonizing space for a more truth-telling counter-narrative that problematizes Settler colonialism and seeks a different way forward. As a leader in nursing education and a White Settler Canadian, this need for transformation — for a renewed understanding of Canadian history and a reimagined, ethical

relationship with Indigenous people — resonates with me. I recognize the need to interrogate my own understanding of Canada's colonial history, my White Settler identity, and my complicity in colonialism. Gadamer (1960/1989) stated that understanding begins when something addresses us, when it picks *you* out of a crowd and chooses *you*, calls *you* into its world of past and present. I sense an inner longing, a call, to *pause* (Patel, 2016) and turn the ethnographic lens inwards to *understand* the ways my White Settler colonial upbringing has formed my identity and shaped how I view Indigenous people, land, and my position in Canada.

Background and Context

In 2017, I was hired as the Director of Indigenous Initiatives in the Faculty of Nursing at the University of Calgary. As a non-Indigenous nurse with strong Settler ties to Canada, I felt it was my ethical and moral responsibility to help implement the TRC Calls to Action (2015) related to nursing education. When I was a nursing student in the early 1990s, I was taught little about Indigenous people. Though three First Nations communities were located within an hour of the university, I was not taught about their cultures, languages, or presence. Though my nursing program valued social justice and ethical nursing practice, I was not trained to recognize racism or interrogate my own complicity in socio-cultural and historical harms done in Canada and the implications for Indigenous people's health. I first learned about the horrors of Indian Residential Schools during graduate school, and this instance of not-knowing sparked within me a desire to learn more about Indigenous people and find ways to help change nursing education. I wanted to know why I was not taught this crucial information and how I could have remained ignorant despite living so close to Indigenous communities.

The topic of White Settler identity has become increasingly relevant to me. I am fascinated by the ways it shapes my lived experiences and my ability to relate to others and the more-than-human world. Through the two and a half years of doctoral studies, I grew in my connectedness to the social construct of Whiteness and locating myself as a Settler within the Canadian narrative. I am a White

Settler of Scottish and German heritage. My grandparents arrived in Canada during the mid-to-late 19th century when the newly formed Canadian government sought hardworking White farmers to inhabit and cultivate the land. My pioneering grandparents soon anglicized their last names to hide their German heritage and assimilate into the White, dominant society. Ties to culture, language, and faith were severed as my grandparents sought safety from anti-German sentiment during World War I. By the time I was born, the youngest of three children, my parents fit comfortably within the middle class in Calgary, Alberta. Having moved away from the coast before I was born, our infrequent visits were insufficient to maintain a deep connection to my extended family or heritage. I considered myself a CBC radio listening, progressive liberal who entered the profession of nursing with the hopes of moving overseas to help others. I was a proud Canadian. I believed in the myths of individualism and meritocracy. I was ignorant to my own positionality, privilege, Whiteness, and my need for liberation.

In 2007, my husband, a physician, and I moved with our young children to the jungles of South America with the hopes of training Indigenous leaders in basic medicine. Rather than simply providing medical care during visits to the villages, we worked *with* Indigenous leaders to empower them to care for their own people's medical needs. While living and working in the villages, we witnessed the Indigenous communities' fight for land rights and sovereignty because their human rights were being actively violated by a government that viewed Indigenous people as second-class citizens. Upon my return to Canada, this personal connection to the fight in South America sensitized me to the Indigenous people's call for land rights, clean water, and sovereignty in my home country. I was shocked to realize it was my own government perpetrating harm, and I was personally benefitting from the resource exploitation. Though I knew Canada's First Peoples inhabited the land in the past, I was suddenly aware of their current struggle for basic rights. Hearing about the struggle of Indigenous people in Canada helped me to see I held to a reductive mythic national narrative that conceptualized Indigenous people as museum-like characters of an idealized colonial past outside comprehension and acknowledgement

(Donald, 2009). I had a growing desire to hear a more truthful account of my own nation's history. I had no idea that my simple questions would lead to life-changing revelations.

In 2014, I was troubled to discover that Indian Residential Schools (IRS) and Indian hospitals ran from the mid-1800s through to 1996. When I asked my parents about their first awareness of IRS, I learned my grandparents worked at the Port Alberni School in the 1950s and 60s. The TRC reports (2015) of atrocities at the IRS contrasted with my parents' assurance that reports of abuse were rare. When I heard testimony from Alvin Dixon, my father's childhood friend, about the abuses he faced, I knew I had to learn more. I began to replay my understanding of myself, my family, and my place in Canada as if seeing the previously hidden component of Indigenous history for the first time. Previously innocuous childhood experiences such as my years as a camper at Camp Chief Hector (CCH)³, a local Indigenous-themed summer camp, transformed from being harmless fun to a part of a colonial curriculum that erased Indigenous people from my consciousness. In the years while I was attending summer camp pretending to be a "Native American," I was oblivious to the thousands of Indigenous children forced to sever ties to their language and culture while attending Indian Residential Schools or being taken from their families through the Sixties Scoop and the foster care system (Sinclair & Dainard, 2020). The colonial banking method of education had firmly deposited within me the notion that Indigenous people remained situated in the historical past while I was centred within a dominant narrative and a promising future (Donald, 2009; Freire, 1970/2000).

As I entered the academic world as a faculty member in nursing, I felt a profound pressure to understand my role in the colonial project and invite colleagues to join me in the hard, messy work of truth-telling and reconciliation. As a nurse educator, I wanted to explore how I can raise awareness of nurse educators and nursing students (future colleagues) regarding the legacy and impact of colonialism

³ I have clearance from the University of Calgary CFREB to reference the name of the summer camp.

on Indigenous people. I wanted to find ways to transform myself and invite others to journey together towards healing our relationship with self, land, and Indigenous peoples. As a leader in Indigenous nursing education, I felt it was important to start with myself and interrogate my positionality and encourage other nurse educators to join whether they were farther along in the journey than me or just waking to a more accurate understanding of Canadian history.

Statement of the Research Problem

It is well documented that Indigenous people in Canada have significantly more health disparities than non-Indigenous people, and this difference is linked to structural racism and the legacy of colonization embedded within society and health care environments (Allan & Smylie, 2015; Browne, 2017). Considering these health disparities are rooted in colonial structures, nurse educators have an ethical responsibility to prepare nursing students to acknowledge and redress the harms faced by Indigenous peoples (Canadian Nurses Association, 2018; TRC, 2015). Most nurse educators in Canada identify as White Settlers, and many White Settlers maintain a superficial understanding of Canada's colonial history and their own identity as Settlers (Bell, 2020; Donald, 2009; 2012). Understanding one's identity as a Settler colonizer within a narrative of Canada that considers Indigenous perspectives and ethical relationality is an important starting point for redressing the harms caused by colonialism. However, there remains a dearth of resources available to help nurse educators develop an awareness of their identity as Settlers and transform their relationship with Canada's colonial history, Indigenous peoples, and the land.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to understand the ways White Settler educators conceptualize their identity within the context of Canada's colonial narrative. I provide a generative space for critical reflectivity on my social location through creative, embodied explorations of my Settler-colonial story and experiences, Indigenous stories and experiences, and dialogical engagement with Canada's socio-

historical configuration as a Settler nation-state. I consider the ways Whiteness, (DiAngelo, 2018a), Settler moves to innocence (Tuck & Yang, 2012), and Settler relationship to land as property act as barriers to transforming Settler understanding of Canada's Settler colonial history and Indigenous sovereignty (Donald, 2009). Taking up Indigenous Métissage as a research sensibility, I engage in narrative and embodied practices to seek to understand and transform my relationship to Indigenous people, land, and Canada's colonial history. By thinking through my lived experiences as an entry point to engage Settler identity, I contribute to a better understanding of how Settler colonial logics influence Canada's colonial relationship between Settlers and Indigenous people.

Research Questions

In order to understand White Settler identity and the ways Settlers can transform their understanding of Canada's colonial narrative, the overarching question this study addresses is:

1. How do I understand my White Settler experiences in order to restore my relationship with Indigenous peoples?

The secondary questions are:

2. In what ways do narrative and embodied practices of Indigenous Métissage transform White Settler understanding of and relationship to land?
3. In what ways do Whiteness and Settler moves to innocence⁴ act as barriers to transformation?
4. In what ways are Indigenous peoples represented in Settler colonial histories?

⁴ Settler moves to innocence are strategies or positionings Settlers used to attempt to relieve feelings of guilt or responsibility without giving up land or power or privilege when confronted with the realities of colonialism (Tuck & Yang, 2012).

Rationale and Significance

Many non-Indigenous educators are required to participate in enacting the TRC Calls to Action (2015) in higher education. Teaching about the harms and legacy of colonization and its impacts on Indigenous peoples requires a nuanced, critical understanding of Canadian history and one's place within this history. Donald (2009) argues that non-Indigenous people have been taught a reductive Canadian national narrative that erases Indigenous people from their present imagination and shapes their relationships in a way that weighs heavily on Indigenous people. Using my own Settler story as an entry point, I uncover the ways colonial logics erased Indigenous people from my historical consciousness. I consider how my Settler education taught me to view Indigenous people as the problem rather than view colonization as the source of the problem when considering the impacts of colonization and the harms done to Indigenous people. I weave together and juxtapose Indigenous and Settler accounts of history, land, and relationship to foster a more ethical way of being in relationship with the land and Indigenous people. I engage in embodied, narrative practices in novel ways as a means of transforming my own relationship to history, land, and Indigenous people. Even though each Settler Canadian's story is unique, this study hopes to provide solid narratives that speak to the commonality of White Settler identities. I aspire to provide *one way* for a White Settler colonizer to wrestle with their own identity and relationship to Indigenous people, history, and land, by means of Indigenous Métissage. Through deeply personal, accessible storytelling and reflection, I shed light on how Settler education has shaped my understanding of history and relationships and how embodied and imaginative narrative practices can be a means of transformation. As a nurse educator who helps to implement the TRC Calls to Action (2015) within my institution, I demonstrate the importance of turning the ethnographic lens towards myself and to do my *own work* so that I can teach others to see the ways we have been formed by colonial logics.

Theoretical Framework and Research Design

White Settler identity is a complex topic located within the socio-historical Canadian context. While I am concerned about centering White Settler identity as a research topic since Whiteness is typically centered in Canadian society, I believe it is important to understand White Settler Identity in order to rethink historic and current relations between Settlers and Indigenous people in more ethically relational terms (Donald, 2012; Regan, 2010). I find Freire's (1970/2000) *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* to be a hopeful theoretical lens through which to view Settler identity. I consider Freire's work as a theoretical framework in more depth in Chapter two.

At first, I struggled to find an effective research paradigm to explore and understand this phenomenon in a way that maintained the complexity of the topic and is situated in the Canadian context. I am drawn to narrative approaches through which to examine and transform my Settler identity. While many narrative approaches exist, such as autoethnography (Bochner & Ellis, 2016), I found myself longing for a transformative narrative approach that considers the particularities of the Canadian context and that is an appropriate research approach for non-Indigenous scholars to practice. Donald (2009; 2012) invites both Indigenous people and Settlers to engage with Indigenous Métissage as a transformative research sensibility to explore the historical and current Indigenous/Settler relationship to each other and to the land. Though Indigenous Métissage is a decolonizing Indigenous approach to research, it shares affinities with some interpretive qualitative approaches to research, particularly those that "require hermeneutic imagination directed towards telling of a story that belies colonial frontier logics and fosters decolonizing" (Donald, 2012, p. 533). As Plains Cree and Saulteaux scholar, Margaret Kovach notes, qualitative research is interpretive and offers space for Indigenous ways of researching where both Indigenous and non-Indigenous researchers can find common ground. It best fits this study because it is "grounded in people's lived experiences" and "is typically enacted in naturalistic settings, focuses on context and is emergent and evolving" (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2016, p.

45). By using Indigenous Métissage, the complexity of the concept of White Settler identity can be examined and transformed through narrative and embodied practices.

Researcher Assumptions

Four primary assumptions should be clarified when undertaking this study. The first and most important assumption to acknowledge is that every person who lives in Canada who is not Indigenous is a visitor. Though not all non-Indigenous Canadians view themselves as Settlers, I choose this term to describe my relationship to Canada. Some non-Indigenous Canadians view themselves as newcomers⁵ or Canadians, or they may choose not to reflect on their identity in relation to Canada and its history. Canadians of European descent tend to view themselves as the undisputed citizen with rights (Battell Lowman & Barker, 2015; Regan, 2010). Given the assumptions held by White Canadians about themselves, I think it is important that White Canadian-born citizens interrogate the ways their behaviour, beliefs, and assumptions align with Settler-colonial identity. Although there is tension that arises from centering Whiteness, it is done with the goal of helping Settlers better relate to Indigenous people in Canada. The second assumption recognizes the strengths of imaginative writing as a transformative technique, particularly when engaging in Indigenous Métissage (Donald, 2009; 2012; Hasebe-Ludt et al., 2009). By weaving together stories, historical accounts, and reflective texts, Métissage has the potential for ethical rejuvenation and redemption. Likewise, the third assumption accepts embodied practices such as spending time on the land as transformative (Blood et al., 2012). Lastly, the fourth assumption establishes that relationships can be ethically established and maintained

⁵ I choose to use the term newcomer to describe non-Indigenous Canadians who do not identify as Settlers, though I recognize this term is contested and does not adequately capture the diversity and complexity of the storied relationships between non-Indigenous peoples, the land, and Indigenous peoples.

with humans and more-than-humans from the past and present. All these assumptions must be carefully considered and acknowledged.

Dissertation Organization

This dissertation has six chapters. In chapter two, I locate my work in relation to existing scholarship and acknowledge the many voices that inform my work. In chapter three, I explain the beliefs and principles that inform this study, articulate my methodological approach, and outline my research design. In chapter four, I take up Indigenous Métissage, braiding together texts about my childhood experiences at an Indigenous-themed summer camp. In chapter five, I consider how the stories and accounts woven together speak to both the specific history of camp and to the broader issues shaping the relationship between Indigenous people and Canadians. Finally, in chapter six, I consider the ways the textual braid speaks of a way forward that is truthful and hopeful.

Definition of Key Terminology

While many of the terms used in this study are explained in greater depth in the upcoming chapters, I offer my brief descriptions of key terms that are relevant and related to this inquiry.

Terms

Banking method of education: The type of passive, unquestioned, deposit-like method of education societies use to maintain a dehumanizing status quo for both the oppressor and oppressed (Freire, 1970/2020).

Settler colonial logics: The logics that undergird and structure Settler society in a way that benefits and sustains Settler society while diminishing and erasing Indigenous people and their connection to the land (Donald, 2009; Tuck & Yang, 2012).

Conscientization: Conscientization or conscientização is a liberating state of critical consciousness or perceiving social, political, and economic contradictions and learning how to take action against the oppressive elements of reality (Freire, 1970/2020).

Ethical relationality: I draw from Donald's (2009; 2012) work on ethical relationality. Ethical relationality is how disparate groups of people acknowledge their differences, turn to face each other, and relate to each other in ways that bring life.

Kinship: I draw from Daniel Justice's (2018) work on kinship. Kinship is a practice of being a good relative with humans and more-than-humans; about struggling for a common future and being responsible for the other.

Indigenous Métissage: Drawing on Donald's (2012) understanding of Indigenous Métissage, I see it as a research sensibility informed by Indigenous values, ethics, and ways of knowing in the Canadian context. It is a placed-based narrative practice that purposefully juxtaposes layered understandings and interpretations of place and histories in order to draw attention to and counter colonial logics, raise historical consciousness, and imagine a better way of being in relationship together as Canadians and Indigenous peoples.

Settler colonialism: Settler colonialism is a system of colonialism predicated on the replacement of Indigenous people by Settlers who structure society according to their own logics, laws, and culture (Tuck & Yang, 2012). It is structured around one central concern: the accumulation and ownership of land (Wolfe, 2006).

Settler moves to innocence: Settler moves to innocence are strategies or positionings Settlers use to attempt to relieve feelings of guilt or responsibility without giving up land or power or privilege when confronted with the realities of colonialism (Tuck & Yang, 2012).

Whiteness: Whiteness is a socially constructed relational category that maintains political, cultural, and educational dominance based on race (Baldwin et al., 2011; Frankenberg, 2001). It is the ubiquitous, unmarked center and dominant hegemony that shapes through boundaries, excludes, and defines the racialized "other" in North American society (Doane, 2003).

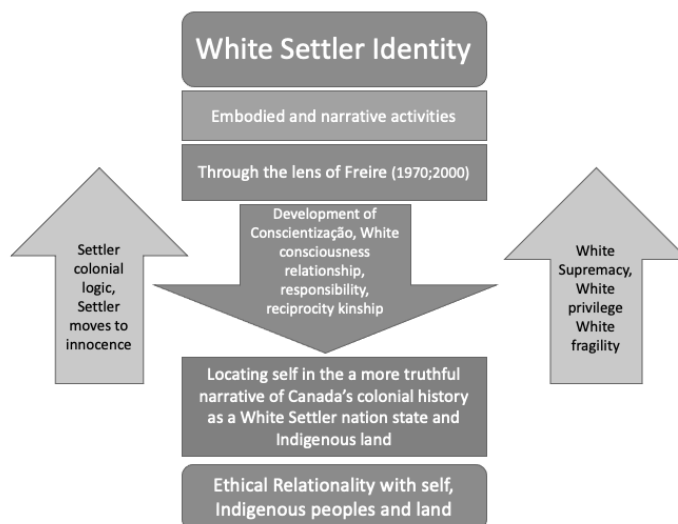
Chapter 2

A Review of the Relevant Literature

The purpose of this literature review is to locate my work on White Settler identity in relation to existing scholarship and to acknowledge the many voices that inform my work. As Moules (2002) notes, one “necessarily makes choices about whose voices speak loudest to us” (p. 12). In this chapter, I develop a conceptual framework and explain how the concept of White Settler identity is situated within the broader literature. The literature review underpins the inquiry through the conceptual framework by providing reference points from which the research questions emerge. Through this conceptual framework, I bring together White Settler colonial theories and the concepts of ethical relationality. Freire’s (1970/2000) *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* serves as a theoretical lens through which I view White Settler identity, the particularities of Settler colonialism, and the intersecting logics of Whiteness and Settler colonialism within the Canadian context (See Figure 1). I consider various voices and embodied practices as ways to trouble Settler complacency in hope of developing an ethic of historical consciousness that can positively influence how Settlers and Indigenous people are in relation to each other (Donald, 2009).

Figure 1

Conceptual Framework for White Settler Identity Transformation



White Settler Colonialism

The words we use to name ourselves are important...We need a name that can help us see ourselves for who we are, not just who we claim to be. For that, we need a term that shifts the frame of reference away from our nation, our claimed territory, and onto our relationships with systems of power, land, and the peoples on whose territory our country exists. (Battell Lowman & Barker, 2015, p. 1)

In Canada, the words White Settler are enmeshed with the process of Settler colonialism both historically and with regard to the present context (Battell Lowman & Barker, 2015). In her 2010 book, *Unsettling the Settler Within*, Regan sought to confront, unsettle, and transform non-Indigenous Canadians by naming their colonizer nature. Similarly, I seek to challenge the myth Canadians, myself included, hold of the “benevolent peacemaker- the bedrock of Settler identity- to understand how colonial forms of denial, guilt, and empathy act as barriers to transformative socio-political change” (p. 11). I seek to understand my White Settler identity and Settler colonialism with the hopes of finding a more hopeful path of transformation and right-relatedness to self, Indigenous people, and land. I engage with the literature to unsettle and provoke transformation within myself, to learn from those who have gone before me and the lessons they share.

Settler Colonialism

Settler colonialism is a form of colonialism that is structured around one central concern: the accumulation and ownership of land (Tuck, 2016; Tuck &ocollet, 2016). In the Settler colonial logic, land is something to be acquired and owned by a few (Patel, 2016). The Settler colonial understanding of land differs ontologically from an Indigenous understanding of land as an ancestor, source of life, and agentic entity (Patel, 2016; Treaty 7 Elders et al., 1996). Unlike other forms of imperial colonialism, where the imperial nation exerts financial and state control through exploitation from afar, Canada was formed through international agreements that freed the nation from imperial power (Veracini, 2010). In

its place, an entirely new society was formed, a Settler colonial society. Though often viewed as such, Settler colonialism is not simply a past event but is an ongoing ideology and practice that structures Canada as a nation and the relationships between its people (Battell Lowman & Barker, 2015; Wolfe, 2006). Settler colonialism structures society in a way that maintains uneven benefits toward Settler society and harms Indigenous peoples (Sylvestre et al., 2019).

Settler Identity

Though the term Settler is a contested term, I see it as a way of naming what many Canadians deny; the nation was built on the attempted destruction of Indigenous nations (Battell Lowman & Barker, 2015). In many ways, Indigenous and Settler peoples in North America are defined by their relationship to each other and their relationship to the land (Battell Lowman & Barker, 2015; Tuck & Yang, 2012). Unlike migrants, immigrants or newcomers who join a society and move towards assimilation, Settlers bring their laws and worldviews and enforce them in a new land (Tuck & Recollet, 2016). Settlers came to Canada to “recreate the societies they left in their image and on their terms, while also asserting continual sovereignty” over the land, laws, and Indigenous peoples (Lewis, 2017, p. 478). When considering pre-colonial Canada, Donald (2009) highlighted that all places in Canada were once Indigenous lands and remain so today because they were not legally ceded (Tuck & Yang, 2012). Historically, Indigenous peoples acted as a barrier to the accumulation of land, so Settlers structured society to ensure the erasure of Indigenous people through state-sanctioned starvation (Daschuk, 2019), forced assimilation, and genocide (Tuck & Recollet, 2016). This intentional and ongoing colonial project required disrupting the relationship between Indigenous people and the land (Wolfe, 2006).

Colonial Myths

Many Canadians believe the colonial myth that Settlers brought peaceful progress, law and order, and good government to a land and peoples who were lacking (Wysote & Morton, 2019). Instead, what occurred was cultural genocide. Mitchell et al. (2018) noted, “Indigenous narratives reveal the

existence of many diverse and rich cultures with sophisticated economies, governance structures, laws, education, healthcare, social welfare, diplomacy, and child welfare prior to contact and settlement” (p. 353). Rather than respecting Indigenous sovereignty, Canadian Settler colonial society sought to destroy Indigenous political and social institutions, seize land, forcibly transfer, and restrict people’s movement, ban Indigenous people from speaking their languages, prohibit spiritual practices, and ensure families could not transmit their cultural values and identity to their children (TRC, 2015).

Tuck and Collet (2016) suggested the negative stereotypes about Indigenous people that permeate North American culture fail to consider the thriving Indigenous communities that continue to exist and instead uphold the myth that Indigenous people have disappeared, and Settlers have rightfully inherited the empty land. Anishinaabe scholar Vizenor (2008) used the notion of survivance to frame such stories of Indigenous persistence and agency while avoiding the simplistic rendering of Indigenous people as the victimized remnant of an oppressed people. While Settler colonialism seeks to erase Indigenous people from both the past and present, survivance emphasizes creative, agentive actions that avoids the trap of solely defining Indigenous peoples in relation to tragedy and the legacy of victimry. To awaken Settlers to the realities and consequences of Settler colonialism, Janzen (2019) recommended juxtaposing images and stories of Indigenous nations thriving pre-European contact with the losses experienced under colonial rule to provoke a much-needed conversation about our shared colonial past and to illustrate how systemic racism continues to operate in the present.

Within the colonial system, political, economic, and cultural conditions of inequity were enforced using violent cultural control and forced assimilation (Mitchell et al., 2018; Taylor, 2018). Indigenous nations were seen as barriers to progress, a problem to be solved. Superintendent for Indian Affairs Duncan Campbell Scott’s famous quote reveals his intentions saying, “I want to get rid of the Indian problem. Our object is to continue until there is not a single Indian in Canada that has not been absorbed into the body politic” (as cited in Titley, 1988, p. 50). Indian Residential Schools were an

outworking of “an intergenerational history of dispossession, violence, abuse, and racism that is a fundamental denial of the human dignity and rights of Indigenous peoples” (Regan, 2010, p. 5). It is troubling but important to acknowledge that Indigenous peoples were forcibly removed from their lands so that Settlers like my ancestors could cultivate, inhabit, and own the land that appeared empty to them.

Pausing to reflect on the past and ongoing forces of Settler colonialism and the ways I benefit from this system is a painful but necessary process. By reflecting on the effects of colonialism and how colonialism is structured to erase and harm Indigenous people while benefitting the dominant society, I gain a more truthful creation story about Canada as a Settler nation-state and the logics that undergirds it (Anderson, 2017; Donald, 2009). Truth-telling is a fundamental first step toward change (Regan, 2010).

Settler Colonial Logics

In his critical analysis of current Indigenous-Canadian relations, Donald (2009) contrasted the image of forts as thriving and progressive with the mythic tipis as a way to capture how a reductive Canadian national narrative celebrates a thriving colonial project while flattening the Indigenous story to a historical moment in the past. The colonial frontier logics, suggested Donald, perpetuate the belief that Canadians and Indigenous people inhabit separate realities; “official versions of history, which begin as cultural and contextual interpretations of events, morph into hegemonic expressions of existing value structures and worldviews of dominant groups in a society” (Donald, 2009, p. 3). If the goal of decolonization includes a resurgence of Indigenous sovereignty and nationhood, the colonial logic that frames Indigenous people as historical, primitive, and outside of society must be contested (Donald, 2009; Tuck & Yang, 2012). The challenge persists that these colonial logics that undergird Canadian society remain hidden from White Settlers. I am left wondering what practices can be employed to help White Settlers, such as myself,

recognize and counter the historical and present-day colonial logics that maintain Settler dominance and flatten and obscure Indigenous agency (Madden, 2019) and survivance (Vizenor, 2008).

White Settler Colonialism

Whiteness and Settler colonialism are enmeshed because the construction of Whiteness occurred during colonialism (Carroll, 2014). Europeans colonized many countries, including Canada, by subsuming the country's culture with the intention of "civilizing" and assimilating to their European values while simultaneously accruing power from their membership as White Europeans (Marx, 2006). Allen (2020) posited, "in a white settler colonial state, white settlers must be produced; they must *become* white and be *made* into settlers" [italics in the original] (p. 380) through racial socialization. Given the preoccupation of Settlers with land acquisition, it is not surprising that land ownership was connected to White identity (Carroll, 2014). Although colonization in Canada began more than two centuries ago, it continues to structure Canadian society.

In Canada, Euro-Canadian cultural identity and Whiteness maintain dominance as the naturalized norm by which others are measured (Kim-Cragg, 2019). Though not explicitly taught, a Whiteness-linked understanding of civilization and naturalization remains a hidden yet profoundly influential cultural curriculum. However, like a null curriculum, this dominance is kept hidden from Settler society, and therefore Settlers can claim innocence through denial and thus blame Indigenous peoples for the impacts of the harm (Battell Lowman & Barker, 2015; Flinders et al., 1986; Kim-Cragg, 2019). Regan (2010) suggested that Canada's identity as a Settler colonial nation remains repressed and unscrutinized under its guise as a peaceful multicultural nation, thus allowing oppressive colonial processes to continue at the expense of Indigenous people's wellbeing. While Wolfe (2006) argued the exploitation of land and labour was facilitated through the erasure of Indigenous people and historical amnesia that allows Settler society to deny its existence and its exploits. Much like *a difficult inheritance*, this Settler-colonial understanding is a curriculum that denies the humanity of Indigenous people, keeps

untold violence hidden, and must be countered (Mishra Tarc, 2011). Therefore, it is important to interrogate the dominance of Whiteness in Canadian society to understand why White Settler colonialism remains unchallenged.

Within my conceptual framework, I consider Whiteness to be a barrier or force that moves me away from the transformation of my relationship to self, land, and Indigenous peoples. Though many scholars do not link Whiteness with Settler colonialism and identity, I agree with Allen (2020) that these concepts are inextricably linked. In the following section, I consider the complex notion of Whiteness and the ways Whiteness can impede transformation. As I engage with the many theorists who identify the negative impacts of racism and the hiddenness of Whiteness, I find myself reflecting on the experiences that helped me recognize the negative consequences of racism, particularly anti-Indigenous racism and the influence Whiteness has in my life and society. Bearing witness to people's stories of lived experiences of racism has been important in my consciousness-raising. I seek to understand how delving into my childhood experiences at Camp Chief Hector will help raise my consciousness about my identity and influence my relationships to myself, land, and Indigenous peoples. I also wonder how my White identity will act as a barrier to change and whether or not I will recognize its effects.

Whiteness

Like other racial locations, Whiteness is a product of history and a relational category with socially constructed meaning (Frankenberg, 2001). Though race is socially constructed and without a biological basis, it influences politics, economics, culture, and education in powerful and real ways (Baldwin et al., 2011). Frankenberg described Whiteness as multi-dimensional, including a location of structural advantage, a standpoint from which people look at themselves and others, and a set of cultural practices enacted on and through individual, cultural, and institutional levels. It is a "complex, bifurcated narrative" whereby one category of Whiteness receives unearned advantage while holding

power to “exclude, benefit from, and enact violence on those who do not fall into this category” (Lea et al., 2018, p. 1).

Within North America, Whiteness has been centred as normative and dominant to the point that it is the standard from which “different other” is compared, and norms surrounding Whiteness becomes the standard for success and failure (Battiste, 2013; Dyer, 1997; Van Herk et al., 2011).

Whiteness is the politically and culturally dominant hegemony that shapes, through boundaries and exclusions, the racialized other in North American society (Doane, 2003). Dyer (1997) described Whiteness as the ubiquitous, unmarked center against which others are compared and found wanting. It is maintained as a default and hidden category by those who benefit from it, behave, and act as if it does not exist (Kim-Cragg, 2019). One of the challenges when seeking to shift a system that benefits one group over another is that White people’s lack of awareness of themselves as racial beings hinders their capacity to develop racial consciousness and redress the harms of racism (Dressel et al., 2010). My own experience has taught me that White people resist being called White, even by others from within their group. As with many others who identify as White, I, too, can feel uncomfortable when reading about or discussing Whiteness and racism. Still, I lean into the discomfort because it is important to raise my awareness of my positionality.

The study of racism has often pathologized those most directly impacted by racism instead of calling out the dominant group who perpetuate and benefit from a racist system (Lund & Carr, 2010). As DiAngelo (2018b) wrote, “racism is an all-encompassing, multi-dimensional, adaptive system that works on multiple levels to maintain an unequal distribution of resources and power between White people and people of Colour” (p. 266). It is produced when policies and ideas replicate and normalize racial inequities (Kendi, 2019). Within this system, White power and privilege are normalized and obscured by Whiteness (DiAngelo, 2018b) and used by White people to reap the benefits and enact violence (Lea et al., 2018). Whiteness is maintained by an ideology of individualism that dismisses the significance of

race, gender, class, and the effects of various forms of oppression and relies on meritocracy to explain advantage and success (DiAngelo, 2018b). The myth of meritocracy works against non-White people in Canada because it fails to account for the benefits accrued by group membership (Lund & Carr, 2010). Societies and communities, such as Canada, centre Whiteness as the dominant paradigm from which norms, rules, and laws are created (Saad, 2020). Despite the inequities caused by racist systems, White people do not recognize or admit to White supremacy, and thus the cultural dominance of Whiteness and its effects often remain invisible to White people but not to non-White people (Ahmed, 2012; DiAngelo, 2018b).

White Supremacy

White supremacy is central to the idea of White identity (Tuck & Yang, 2012). It is a racist ideology based on the belief that White people are inherently superior to other races, and systems and institutions are rightfully structured to uphold White dominance (Saad, 2020). Schroeder and DiAngelo (2010) argued that Whiteness is structured historically, socially, politically, and culturally in a manner that reproduces and maintains advantage, racial privilege, and dominance. This advantage is upheld by assumed legal rights to invulnerability and supremacy (Tuck & Yang, 2012).

Smith (2010) highlighted how White supremacy is deeply embedded within North American culture by drawing attention to intersecting logics of White supremacy and Settler colonialism. The first pillar of White supremacy, Smith posited, is the logic of slavery that anchors modern capitalism. Though slavery was abolished in the 1800s, the logic of slavery continues to maintain White supremacy through the commodification of workers, particularly people of colour. The second pillar of White supremacy is genocide (Smith, 2010). This logic anchors colonialism by erasing Indigenous peoples and creating a way for non-Indigenous people to claim land. The erasure of Indigenous people allows non-Indigenous people to feel they can rightfully inherit Indigenous land, resources, spirituality, and culture. The third pillar, suggests Smith, is orientalism. By marking certain people or nations as inferior or foreign, White

supremacy is upheld by a constant concern of threat to the empire's wellbeing. This logic, which serves as an anchor for war, allows dominant White culture to frame immigrants as other and a potential (constant) threat, thus justifying imperialism that brings more land, resources, and enslaved bodies under White control. Though they may shift over time, Smith suggests these pillars act as logics that maintain and sustain White dominance. Though White supremacy is an oppressive system for Black, Indigenous, and people of colour (BIPOC), it grants unearned privileges, protection, and power at an individual and community level to people who identify or are classified as White (Saad, 2020). When seeking to disrupt White supremacy and White dominance, it is important to uncover the barriers to change at an individual and societal level such as cultural hegemony, White privilege, and White fragility.

Cultural Hegemony

In North America, Whiteness acts as a cultural hegemony by structuring norms, policies, practices, and laws that benefit, reflect, and uphold White dominance (Lea et al., 2018). Whiteness is a set of cultural practices that uphold unnamed, unexamined norms which all others are compared and subjected to (Baldwin et al., 2011). Since people who identify as White have controlled major institutions in North American society, their social and cultural understandings and practices became the dominant expectation (Doane, 2003). The normalization of Whiteness has had significant implications for White racial consciousness because White people are unlikely to feel socially or culturally 'different' in their everyday life since Whiteness permeates dominant cultural understandings and institutional practices (Doane, 2003).

Whiteness also draws on cultural mechanisms such as individualism and meritocracy to maintain White power and privilege (Lea et al., 2018). When White people fail to see themselves in racialized terms, they do not recognize the inherent advantages they receive from their group membership and instead view their social and economic achievement as earned (Doane, 2003). Though advantage

through group membership remains hidden to most White people, BIPOC are blamed for their lower economic position, and group claims for reallocation of political, and economic resources are dismissed as requests for preferential treatment by special interest groups (Doane, 2003).

White Privilege

White privilege refers to unearned social and economic advantages experienced by White people by virtue of their membership in a culture characterized by racial inequality (Oxford University Press, n.d.). These advantages are often taken for granted by White people but are not similarly experienced by BIPOC in the same social contexts (McIntosh, 2009). Racialized divisions continue to shape institutions and replicate both privileges and inequities, benefit, and harm (Willinsky, 1998). White privilege provides uneven benefits in Canadian society during social interactions based on socially constructed qualities such as race, class, and gender (Battell Lowman & Barker, 2015). However, many White Canadians resist discussions about racism because multiculturalism policies have led to a belief in the equanimity for racialized groups (Solomon & Daniel, 2015). Many Canadians fail to recognize the nation's racist historical and contemporary treatment of Indigenous people and the implications for upholding White privilege.

Many barriers exist when White individuals are confronted with evidence of White privilege. Solomona et al. (2005) discovered White teacher candidates employed several strategies to avoid interrogating Whiteness and its associated privileges when faced with a consciousness-raising exercise. Even though they upheld equity, racial diversity and social justice as necessary, White teacher candidates resisted attempts to examine, unsettle, and challenge White privilege. When faced with accounts of the consequences of colonization on Indigenous peoples, White teacher candidates used the language of liberalism and meritocracy to resist examining their complicity and privilege. Further, they denied the existence of White privilege and its capital and material benefits. Solomona et al. found participants exhibited a range of emotional reactions in response to the activity that drew attention to

unearned privileges. At times, the participants' emotional response acted as a barrier to moving beyond an ideological discussion of White privilege to consider the reification of its impact. DiAngelo (2018a) pointed to White fragility as one reason White people resist examining how White supremacy and privilege work together to benefit them.

White Fragility

DiAngelo (2018a) described White fragility as “a state even a minimum amount of racial stress in the habitus becomes intolerable, triggering a range of defensive moves” (p. 103). Saad (2020) argued that two main factors of the White experience contribute to White fragility: a lack of exposure to conversations about racism and a lack of understanding of what White supremacy is. White privilege protects White or White-passing people from having to discuss the root causes or implications of racism because their day-to-day life is not impacted by their skin colour (Saad, 2020). To even bring up racism as a concern can be seen as threatening and quash much-needed dialogue and social change due to White fragility (Ahmed, 2012). “This lack of exposure to conversations about the consequences of racism has left [White people] ill-equipped to handle the discomfort of racial conversations” (Saad, 2020, p. 41) and leaves BIPOC feeling like their antiracist work is “like banging your head against a brick wall” (Ahmed, 2012, p. 156). Unfortunately, when White people join in anti-racism work without sufficient skills to cope with the emotions, they can re-centre Whiteness and continue to allow the burden of racism to rest on the racialized others (Ahmed, 2012). White people require opportunities for transformation that centre Whiteness for the purpose of interrogation and change but in a way that does not maintain White dominance. As a White Settler in need of transformation, I recognize the need to watch for how White fragility manifests in me.

White Consciousness

Though Whiteness is often invisible to the very people who benefit from its effects, Frankenberg (2001) suggests White people can grow in their awareness of Whiteness. Dei (2015) argued that the

White/dominant/colonizer does not easily divest themselves of power and privilege because these privileges have been historically enmeshed in identity and culture. Frankenberg (2001) likened her initial awakening to White consciousness as a transformation on the scale of a significant earthquake. However, Frankenberg suggested White people require a stance of lifelong vigilance because individuals easily shift from race-consciousness to unconsciousness with extraordinary ease.

In Canada, privilege and oppression are distributed based on intersectional aspects of identity, yet they often remain invisible and unexamined (Louie, 2020). Though race relates to socio-historical processes that shape society, it is deeply embedded in Canadian society's structures and has tangible and real effects on people's lives (Dei, 2014). Most Canadians would not excuse blatant racist behaviour, yet systemic racism remains a persistent social reality (Lund & Carr, 2010). Dei (2014) suggested anti-racism education must connect with learners' lived experiences to understand how race and social differences relate to their social identities and shape their lived experiences. White supremacy, privilege, and cultural hegemony must be named and interrogated at an individual and societal level while maintaining vigilance for the effects of White fragility. Novel ways are needed to help White Canadians embrace a more truthful understanding of their social location within Canadian society.

Settler Moves to Innocence

It is important to examine the patterned reactions that Settler colonizers make when faced with the costs of a more equal and just society for Indigenous people to understand the barriers to change for Settler colonizers. When confronted by the realities of Settler colonialism in North American society, Tuck and Yang (2012) noted that Settlers resist meaningful change by performing *Settler moves to innocence*. de Leeuw and colleagues (2013) maintained that colonialism has never been comfortable for Indigenous people, and the process of dismantling colonial structures is by nature unsettling, particularly to those who have held power. Tuck and Yang (2012) warned when Settlers face the painful truths about colonialism and the cost of Indigenous sovereignty, they attempt to reconcile guilt by performing

unconscious moves towards innocence that rescue Settler normalcy and ensure Settler futurity. The first Settler move to innocence is Settler nativism, whereby Settlers attempt to deflect Settler identity to maintain privilege and occupy stolen land. Settlers might claim a long-lost Indigenous ancestry or claims to nativism from a store-bought DNA test or heritage website. Tuck and Yang suggested ancestry alone does not make someone Indigenous, but they warn it is a common tactic of Settlers to assuage Settler guilt.

A second Settler move is the Settler adoption fantasy (Tuck & Yang, 2012). This move to innocence is characterized by Settlers who adopt Indigenous practices, knowledges, and identities while hybridizing decolonial thought with Western critical traditions. With this move, Settlers lessen their guilt by adopting Indigenous practices, but they fail to actuate decolonial moves such as assuring Indigenous futurity. Instead, they metaphorically decolonize their world while Indigenous people remain oppressed. While the third move to innocence involves Settlers, who homogenize all marginalized peoples' experiences rather than describing their relationship to Settler colonialism. By grouping experiences and calling all oppression colonization, Settlers easily shift to the idea that no one is a Settler, and thus the status quo is maintained.

Tuck and Yang (2012) warned against the fourth move to innocence, where Settlers consider decolonization a cerebral activity rather than an embodied, emotional, spiritual, and affective act of redressing historical harms. Though Tuck and Yang considered the cultivation of critical consciousness (Freire, 1970/2020) and decolonizing the mind (Fanon, 1963) to be an essential first step, they argued it is not sufficient. The fifth move to Settler innocence involves how Indigenous people are represented, included/excluded by educational research. When Indigenous people are viewed from a deficit perspective, and the problems they face are framed as an achievement gap, Settlers are not implicated in the problem (Patel, 2016).

A final move to innocence involves social justice movements that focus on relieving disparities caused by colonialism without addressing Indigenous sovereignty and land rights (Tuck & Yang, 2012). Since Settler colonialism centres around the relationship to land, this move to innocence fails to free Indigenous land from its Settler-colonial structure (Patel, 2016). Battell Lowman and Barker (2015) maintained that Settlers who are confronting the truth about colonization seek absolution often and right relationship with Indigenous people to recenter their own needs rather than to advance decolonization; indeed, “difficult questions and movements towards land repatriation and reparations, are inherent to a full engagement with decolonization” (Patel, 2016, p. 7). True decolonization requires a shift in imagination, courage, and transformation on the part of Settler colonizers. However, I am left wondering what *moves* towards decolonization look like? How do we enact real transformation of White Settler colonizers and their relationship to land and Indigenous people? How do I enact change in my own life as a White Settler and avoid these moves to innocence?

Pedagogy of the Oppressed

Though first written to raise the consciousness of the Brazilian lower class towards liberation, Freire’s (1970/2000) *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* provides a lens through which to consider White Settler identity transformation. Freire rightfully centred on whom he called the oppressed, but his work extended to those whom he considered the oppressors in the Settler nation-state. Freire called both the oppressed and oppressor to recognize all people as human and interrogate how their thoughts and actions objectify and dehumanize people. He suggested that societies educated using an unquestioned, deposit-like method of education that maintained a dehumanizing status quo. By challenging the *banking method* of education that has permeated the consciousness of both the oppressed and oppressor within a society, Freire called for a different way of thinking and being, leading to critical reflection and action. Praxis, suggested Freire, created the opportunity for liberation and transformation of the mind and situation of the oppressed.

The relationship between the colonizer and the colonized Indigenous people can be understood within the Settler colonial nation-state through the Freirean lens of the oppressor and the oppressed (Freire, 1970/2000). As a White settler colonizer, I am challenged to view myself as the oppressor and to accept that my worldview has been formed by the banking method of education. In Canadian society, the dehumanizing forces of White dominance and relationship to land as property are normalized as the current status quo (Van Herk et al., 2011; Tuck & Yang, 2012; Wolfe, 2006). My understanding of land and my relationship to land has been formed through the banking method, and this identity marks me as an oppressor. Freire challenges the oppressor's necrophilic view of the world by suggesting their drive to objectify everything, and everyone leads to death for themselves and others. The insatiable thirst of Settlers for land and their drive to erase and replace Indigenous people aligns with Freire's description of the oppressor (Freire, 1970/2000; Patel, 2016).

Conscientization

Freire (1970/2020) considered the practice of learning to perceive contradictions and taking actions on oppressive elements of reality to be an important step in developing critical consciousness. He posited that a more truthful understanding of history and a deepened consciousness of one's situation allowed people to imagine a transformed future. Freire challenged the banking model of education that acted as an instrument of oppression by replacing it with a problem-posing method of education. Problem-posing methods fostered critical dialogue and reflection that led to action (praxis) upon one's life. His revolutionary ideas called people living under oppression to see themselves as fully human and to work towards liberation. Conscientization requires oppressors to develop a critical acceptance of their racial identity (position of oppressor) and to work towards solidarity *with* the oppressed rather than *for* the oppressed.

Cultural Invasion

As a Settler nation-state, Canada's forced assimilation of Indigenous people through legislated and cultural dominance exemplifies the Freirean concept of cultural invasion (Freire, 1970/2000). With cultural invasion, invaders (actors) superimpose themselves on the people and structure society to maintain superiority and structures of oppression. Wolfe (2006) argued that Settler colonialism moves beyond cultural invasion to attempted erasure of the Indigenous populations to set up a new society. Though the oppressor's consciousness can be raised regarding their situatedness and complicity within the nation's history, Freire reminds oppressors that patterns of violence and domination are deeply entrenched within their identity. Re-humanization, a concept introduced by Freire, requires oppressors to recognize the structural nature of oppression and exploitation and renounce structures of power, such as White supremacy. Countering cultural invasion requires the re-humanization of both the oppressed, whom the oppressor has objectified, and the oppressor, who structures their world from the standpoint of power. Like Freire, Regan (2010) understood the human world as historical and the transformation of reality, a task for humanity. Regan called for Settlers to tell the truth about Canada's history, name their complicity, and work to denounce and oppose the nation's oppression of Indigenous people.

Cultural Synthesis

In contrast to cultural invasion, where colonizers impose themselves on the people, Freire (1970/2000) imagined a world where actors, come from "another world" not to invade, "to teach or to transmit or to give anything, but rather to learn, with the people, about the people's world" (p. 180). Cultural synthesis is a humanizing process where newcomers become integrated with the people and coauthor an existence. In contrast to colonialism, Freire called for creative, life-giving interactions between peoples where the contradictions between worldviews are resolved through respect and support instead of domination. From an Indigenous perspective, Cree Scholar Willie Ermine (2007)

suggested the concept of ethical space as a model to guide cooperation between Indigenous and Western systems. Indigenous knowledges, which cannot be generalized, are diverse, local, and connected to the land and cannot be assimilated into Western ways of knowing (Greenwood et al., 2017). Unlike the forced assimilation of cultural invasion or the erasure of Settler colonialism, ethical space is created when two people groups with disparate worldviews and uneven power differentials navigate the spaces of the interface between their ways of being and knowing in a respectful and curious way (Greenwood et al., 2017). Developing ethical space through mutual respect and creativity moves beyond cultural synthesis and maybe a more appropriate (and hopeful) way of approaching relationships between Indigenous peoples and Settlers within the Settler-colonial setting.

Solidarity

Freire (1970/2020) warned that liberation could not be enacted in “isolation or individualism, but only in fellowship and solidarity” (p. 85). He called for an end to the antagonistic relationship between the oppressor and the oppressed. Freire aspired for people to act together towards mutual humanization in humility, courage, and love. Freire challenged the oppressor to refrain from acting like a saviour and instead work with the oppressed to liberate each other. A quote often attributed to Lilla Watson, an Australian Indigenous woman, rings true to me: “If you have come here to help me, you are wasting your time, but if you have come because your liberation is bound up with mine, let us work together” (Lilla Watson, 1985). White Settler-colonial liberation and Indigenous liberation must both lead to re-humanization through mutual processes if the Canadian situation is to improve.

Enacting Pedagogy of the Oppressed

Building on the work of Freire (1970/2020), Curry-Stevens (2007) put forth a pedagogy for the privileged with the hopes of finding ways to transform their relationship with people who have fewer advantages. Curry-Stevens advocated for approaches that counteract hegemonies that dehumanize the privileged and the oppressed. The most significant behavioural change is becoming an ally in the

struggle for equality and social justice. The first phase in the transformation process is a shift in awareness about privilege; however, this stage does not necessarily involve action. Much like DiAngelo (2018a), Curry-Stevens found people interrogating their privilege for the first time often experience fragility. Participants require time, support, and ongoing exposure to issues that make privilege tangible to move beyond fragility. Curry-Stevens proposed a ten-step model for transformation to foster behavioural change that moves a learner through a confidence-shaking process through to the confident declaration of action. Identifying oppression as structural, enduring, and pervasive is essential as it requires an understanding of how power manifests itself in oppressive behaviours, and how power divides, marginalizes, and exploits some of the population while benefiting others.

Interestingly, the process leads from awareness to locating oneself as oppressed before then locating oneself as privileged. Rather than considering this step evidence of the denial of privilege, Curry-Stevens found that privileged learners who first reflected on their location of oppression were more successful in reflecting on their privilege and the resulting unearned benefits. An important step in the processing of understanding privilege is to understand oneself as implicated in the oppression of others and to recognize oneself as an oppressor. The final four steps move beyond conscientization (Freire, 1970/2020) to building agency and skills to undertake action or praxis. I am drawn to practices that allow participants to interrogate their privilege and see themselves as oppressors while providing ways to enact social justice in meaningful ways. However, this model does not address the particularities of Settler colonialism and White Settler colonizers' need for transformation of their relationship to history, land, and Indigenous peoples.

A Better Way Forward

A common theme throughout the literature I reviewed was that of movement. Tuck and Yang (2012) revealed Settlers faced with the realities of colonization undertake moves to innocence to absolve themselves of Settler guilt. I am left wondering what characterizes moves towards

decolonization. While Donald (2009) responded to colonial logics with a sense of “responsibility and an act of kindness viewed as movement toward connectivity and relationality” (p. 19), what might that look like for a White Settler colonizer? Freire (1970/2020) called on members of the oppressor class to join the oppressed in their struggle for liberation, to cease being an exploiter and a benefactor of a broken system through praxis. I find myself longing for decolonizing practices that help me to interrogate my position as a White Settler Colonizer and move beyond conscientização. I long to understand how my Settler colonial upbringing has shaped me, how I can relate differently to self, land, Indigenous peoples, and how this materializes into decolonial change. I am curious, open, and hopeful.

Locating Colonialism in a Shared Story

White Settler colonialism causes pain in real people’s lives, and it deserves scrutiny and exposure (Tuck & Yang, 2012). To counter colonization, Battiste (2013) calls for a transformed understanding of Canada’s colonial history, treaty obligations, and the need for a renewed relationship between Canadians and Indigenous peoples. In many ways, the dominant narrative of Settler innocence and Settler nativism has formed our collective identity as Settler Canadians but acted as *a difficult inheritance*, weighing heavily on Indigenous peoples (Allan & Smylie, 2015; Mishra Tarc, 2011). Donald (2009) argued, “official versions of history, which begin as cultural and contextual interpretations of events, morph into hegemonic expressions of existing value structures and worldviews of dominant groups in society” (p. 3). By countering the reductive dominant colonial narratives that idealize the civilization of the land and First Nations People, assumptions about how the nation is structured and the colonial nature of the relationship and connections between Indigenous peoples and Settler Canadians can be examined (Donald, 2012).

Decolonizing Stories

Madden (2019) called for counter-stories that work against the colonial logics that flatten and obscure Indigenous agency in society. These complex counter-stories emphasize Indigenous sovereignty,

agency, and strategies through highlighting narratives of refusal, resistance, resilience, re-storying, and resurgence (Madden, 2019). In many ways, “stories remind us who we are and of our belonging” (Kovach, 2009, p. 94). Regan (2010) suggests “Canadians need to ‘restory’ the dominant-culture version of history” to help Settlers to reflect critically on how they have benefitted from Settler society and to consider their responsibility in redressing harms (p. 6). In Canada, we require a new, more truthful narrative that elucidates how Canada was divided according to racial and cultural categories with embedded structural inequities that benefit some and harm others (Willinsky, 1998). In the Canadian context, anti-racism education requires that non-Indigenous Canadians implicate themselves in the historical narratives and processes that have led to Settler-occupied lands (Dei, 2014).

There is a risk of seeking a new understanding of Canada as an attempt to relieve Settler “feelings of guilt or responsibility without giving up land or power or privilege, without having to change much at all” (Tuck & Yang, 2012, p. 10). It is not sufficient for Settler Canadians to solely acknowledge the past and its impact and maintain the status quo (Mitchell et al., 2018). In social justice work, a focus is often placed on the impacts of colonization on vulnerable communities but not on the “requisite counterbalance of consciousness-raising and de-powerment of dominant populations” (Mitchell et al., 2018, p. 350). Decolonization requires shifts in power, social change, a decentering Whiteness as normative and a process that moves beyond simply anti-racism and social justice, or else the process becomes “yet another form of Settler appropriation” (Tuck & Yang, 2012, p. 3).

Ceremony and Cultural Practices

Madden (2019) regarded practices that honour Indigenous knowledges and nurtures Indigenous communities as de/colonizing, particularly ones that include human and more-than-human worlds. Such practices may provide a means to transform Settler colonizers relationship to Indigenous people and land, however, such practices are often unfamiliar to non-Indigenous people. To provide guidance for such decolonization, the University of Calgary’s Indigenous Strategy *ii’taa’poh’to’p* (2017) suggested

ceremony and cultural practices as means of transforming ways of relating to land and humanity. Four core elements are mentioned when drawing on ceremony and cultural practices as means of transforming ways of connecting (1) reconciliation, which speaks to the need to acknowledge the impacts of colonization and redress harms; (2) space and place, which focuses on increasing the visibility of Indigenous people and their cultures through practices such as traditional acknowledgment of territory; (3) stewardship, which includes the teaching of natural laws of the land and land- and place-based learning to right peoples' relationship to the land; and (4) reciprocity, which requires respectful engagement with Indigenous peoples as equal partners.

Decolonization is unsettling, deeply personal, and challenging work. I find myself longing for generative spaces to engage in critical reflectivity on my own White Settler identity to locate myself in a more truthful understanding of Canada's Settler colonial history. I look to Indigenous Métissage as a hopeful practice where I can engage in creative, embodied exploration of my Settler-colonial story and experiences. Decolonization requires a renewed relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples that creates mutual space for flourishing (Battiste, 2013). It aims to undo the effects of colonialism, including "repatriation of land simultaneous to the recognition of how land and relations to land have already been differently understood and enacted" (Tuck & Yang, 2012, p. 7). Tuck and Yang warned of moves towards decolonization that fail to include tangible acts toward Indigenous sovereignty and futurity. While institutions such as the University of Calgary recognize the importance of exposing non-Indigenous Canadians to the realities, histories, cultures, and beliefs of Indigenous people in Canada, questions remain as to *how* individuals and institutions can implement these changes and uphold the goal of decolonizing educative spaces. How do individuals and institutions do this in a *good way* that transforms the Settler and benefits Indigenous peoples (particularly when such a lofty goal requires a renewal of relationship to land and repatriation of Indigenous lands)?

A Renewed Relationship

Within Indigenous research methodologies, Kovach (2009) suggested stories hold within them the knowledges, relationships, and the possibility of transformation. As Donald (2019) proclaimed, “stories that give life emerge from people sitting together in the spirit of good relations and thinking carefully on their shared future as human beings” (p. 121). Hope is found in a change in the relationship where Settlers no longer view Indigenous people as a problem to be solved but instead participate in reciprocity, responsibility, restitution, and a right relationship with Indigenous people and the land (Battell Lowman & Barker, 2015). Justice (2018) argued “relationships are storied, imagined things; they set the scope for our experience of being and belonging” (p. 74). He advocated for an Indigenous understanding of kinship to guide right relatedness because it incorporates obligations to diverse networks of relations and relationships. Going beyond family, an idea of kinship helps to guide how human societies are structured and how people interact to benefit each other— finding ways to build sustainable, healthy relationships requires imagination, curiosity, and empathy. “It is not enough to rebel against injustices unless we also rebel against our lack of imagination and caring” (Battiste, 2013, p. 190).

Rooted in Place

To counter the dominant stories that construct a particular sense of place which displaces and ignores colonial history and the experience of Indigenous peoples, I see the need to re-story narratives of history that so easily maintain the colonial agenda and warp dominant society’s understanding of Indigenous people (Manning, 2017; Tuck &ocollet, 2012). Donald (2009) suggested a way forward that requires Canadians to expand their understanding of themselves to include a connection to the land and the stories from the *particular places* they reside. I wonder if the Indigenous practice of acknowledging territory could act as a first step. In his teachings, Elder Reg Crowshoe speaks of the Indigenous practice of gaining permission when entering a territory through ceremonies, offering tobacco, and smudging at

a gathering (University of Calgary, 2018). Indigenous peoples practice territorial acknowledgements when they are a guest on the land, and it signifies that they are coming under the authority of the protocols and laws that govern the land and its people. Though land acknowledgements are often viewed as political and a statement about the Indigenous people who reside on the land, Amy Desjarlais, a Knowledge Keeper from Wasauksing First Nation, suggested it is necessary and respectful to consider the land a present character in the acknowledgement (Cass Yorku, 2019). I cannot help but wonder if this practice might prove to be an important early step in locating myself in the particularities of place where I reside.

Relating to Land

I struggle, in ways, to find the right words to animate the land since, in the English language, this denotes human qualities (Kimmerer, 2013). To make territorial acknowledgements meaningful, many Elders and Knowledge Keepers suggest making personal links to the statement (Janzen, 2019). Because the lands where I live hold a history of people dispossessed from their homelands, I recognize the importance of making land acknowledgements personal and reflective of my growing awareness about the places my ancestors have lived and the benefits I have received from this relationship. Such practices highlight my relational responsibility to the First Nations people and the land through a growing understanding of kinship (Justice, 2018).

Re-Storying

As a counter-story to the effects of colonization, I seek to disrupt colonial influences by drawing attention to the relationships between power, knowledges, and ways of being in this world. Nabhan suggested acts of “re-story-ation” to attempt to heal the Settler’s relationship with the land through the story (as cited in Kimmerer, 2018, p. 9). Regan (2010) called Indigenous allies to restory the dominant colonial-Settler version of history and make space for Indigenous counter-narratives and peacemaking practices. Drawing on Daniel Justice’s (2018) understanding of story as a healing practice, I see the

possibilities of weaving fiction and nonfiction to help make visible the people and land who were invisible in the colonial narrative with the hopes of imagining a healthier way of relating. “To remember is a way to re-know and re-claim a part of our life” through storied connection to my ancestors and the land (Cajete, 2017, p. 114).

Conclusion

The purpose of this literature review was to locate my work on White Settler identity in relation to existing scholarship and to acknowledge the many voices that inform my work. Freire’s (1970/2000) *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* serves as a theoretical lens through which I viewed White Settler Identity in the Canadian context. Further, I examine the particularities of Settler colonialism and the intersecting logics of Whiteness and Settler colonialism. I consider various voices and embodied practices as ways to trouble Settler complacency in hopes of developing an ethic of historical consciousness that can positively influence how Settlers and Indigenous people are in relation to each other (Donald, 2009).

Chapter three lays the foundation of this research by clarifying my ontological and epistemological stance as a researcher. I then use this understanding to shape my rationale for choosing the research practice that I feel best aligns with a study on Settler identity. I consider Indigenous Métissage as a research sensibility with the potential to transform my relationship to Settler colonialism and Indigenous sovereignty. Using Indigenous Métissage as a decolonizing research praxis, I consider how to braid personal, historical, and imaginative writings as a way to (re)frame and (re)story Settler and Indigenous relations informed by Indigenous notions of place and ethics.

Chapter 3

Research Practice

Writing is not an innocent practice, it is a form of pedagogy, a way of making the world visible.

Writing is simultaneously a method of discovery, a method of interpretation, and a method of analysis. (Denzin, 2014, p. 569)

Introduction

This study explores the complexity of Settler colonial stories that form White Settler identity in Canada and the ways Settler colonialism influences historic and current Indigenous and Settler relations in Canada. I enact Indigenous Métissage as a means to understand my identity more deeply as a Settler colonizer and the ways stories and experiences have shaped my Settler identity. By providing an account of my own experiences as a White Settler in Canada, I shed light on the socio-cultural influences on my relationship with Canada's colonial history. Through this narrative process, I consider the ways Indigenous Métissage transforms my relationship to Settler colonialism and Indigenous sovereignty. The overarching question of this study is: How do I understand my White Settler experiences in order to restore my relationship with Indigenous peoples? Using Indigenous Métissage as a decolonizing research praxis, I braid personal, historical, and imaginative writings to (re)frame and (re)story Settler and Indigenous relations informed by Indigenous notions of place and ethics. I reimagine how Settler and Indigenous relations may be transformed so that both flourish in Canada by taking up Ermine's (2007) notion of ethical space and Dwayne Donald's (2009; 2012) conception of ethical relationality.

This chapter lays the foundation of this research by clarifying my ontological and epistemological stance as a researcher. I then use this understanding to shape my rationale for choosing the research practice that I felt best aligned with a study on White Settler identity. Alongside a detailed description of the research context, I justify why I chose myself as the research participant and discuss the setting in which the data were written. Next, I describe the interrelated process of enacting

Indigenous Métissage. Lastly, I present the ethical considerations for both myself and in relation to others (Denzin, 2014), and address the trustworthiness, limitations, and delimitations of the study.

Purpose Statement

My purpose in this study is to explore the stories that formed my identity as a Settler in Canada with the hopes of finding ways to transform my relationship to self, land, history, and other. Given the questions that bring me to this research project and my desire to trouble my understanding of myself within the narrative of Canada, I find myself drawn to Indigenous methodologies that provoke, unsettle, and hold the potential to decolonize the spaces where I live and work. As with the Territorial Acknowledgement where I located myself within the Treaty 7 region, I pause to locate myself as a Settler coming to this work in a specific time, place, and space. It is from this standpoint and my desire to honour local Blackfoot sensibilities, that I articulate my epistemological, ontological, and axiological orientation.

Paradigmatic Orientation

As I consider this research project, I feel cautious, yet welcomed by Indigenous scholars who invite non-Indigenous scholars to work with Indigenous methodologies in a respectful manner (Donald, 2012; Kovach, 2009). As a White Settler, I am reminded of the physical, epistemic, and ontological violences committed against Indigenous peoples and their ways (Donald, 2012). Battiste (2013) suggests the term *Indigenist* for non-Indigenous scholars whose work aligns with Indigenous peoples' goals for sovereignty, self-determination, and treaty rights. Cree scholar Sean Wilson (2013), notes Indigenist research works from a worldview that reflects an Indigenous view of reality. I resonate with what Cree Métis scholar, Phyllis Steeves (2010) writes in her doctoral dissertation regarding her worldview:

My beliefs and experiences are inseparable. They relate to a Creator (metaphysics), the universe and how it came to be (cosmology), what I believe about knowledge and why (epistemology), and beliefs about humankind and the nature of being (ontology). This framework of being and

knowing informs every aspect of my life and as such extends into and informs my research framework, facilitating an approach that accepts and acknowledges an interdependency and interconnectedness in life overall. Such interdependency and interconnectedness are applicable in all realms and ways of knowing and being, including those related to academic studies. (pp. 30-31)

It is important for me to articulate how my beliefs about the world shape my research approach. Making visible the assumptions and beliefs that underpin my research approach is a step in forming a credible research approach (Crotty, 1998). I highlight four beliefs that underpin my work.

First, I believe that *relationships* are important in how I approach meaning-making. The idea of a relational worldview is often used by Indigenous scholars as a means to understand how relationships extend beyond humans, to include the more-than-human world (Abram, 1996; Donald, 2016; Kovach, 2009; Smith, 2012). Ethical relationships or right relatedness encompasses how I position myself in this work, how I enact principles of reciprocity, accountability, and whether I conduct myself in *a good way*, (Kovach, 2009; University of Calgary, 2017). This, too, holds true for hermeneutic research which considers context and relationality, and perceives hermeneutics as a response to an ethical call and responsibility to understand (George, 2020). Transforming my relationships is a central concern that brings me to this work, particularly as it concerns my relationship to myself as a White Settler, Indigenous people, and the land. I am inspired to think broadly about how I am in relationship by Donald's reminder that "we need stories and mythologies that teach us how to be good relatives with all our relations- human and more-than-human" (p. 11). I am also drawn to Daniel Justice's writings about kinship. He suggests there is no singular, prescriptive model of kinship for each practice is based on the diversity of Indigenous traditions and is tied to the particularity of place. However, Justice reminds us that the "dominant colonial stories about kinship are designed to destroy Indigenous peoples' ties to our homelands, to one another, and to our other-than-human relatives, and ultimately serve to transform

those lands into exploitable resources and diverse peoples into memories” (p. 84). Drawing on Justice’s work, I find myself looking for generative and transformative ways of being in relationship. It is from this place that I am drawn to Indigenous methodologies that provide a means of expression, exploring, and transforming relationships in an ethical relational manner (Donald, 2012).

Second, I believe in being open to transformation and growth. Just as I believe the universe is governed by natural laws that include dynamic cycles of transformation and renewal, I believe there is opportunity for transformation and renewal within myself and within relationships. If, as Donald (2009) suggests, the epistemological assumptions or colonial logics that divide the world according to racial and cultural categories (Willinsky, 1998) and lead to death, I look for life-giving ways to counter these logics. Though I have received my education in Settler logics through a banking method type of education and found the resulting violences to show this logic wanting (Donald, 2012; Freire, 1970/2020), I seek to honour Indigenous ways of knowing, being, connecting, and doing as a place of renewal and rejuvenation (University of Calgary, 2017). I believe in the mystery of prayer and ceremony to transform; “through prayer and ceremony, we participate in the natural patterns and renew intimate relationships with those entities that give us life” (Donald, 2009, p. 14). Betty Bastien, a Blackfoot scholar, stresses that from a Blackfoot perspective, Indigenous epistemology or *Aistommatoominniki* is embodied knowledge realized when “one has come to the point where one lives one’s knowledge” (p. 198). I remain hopeful and open to the ways transformation may be realized and lived out through this project. In many regards, this is akin to the hermeneutic notion of *aletheia* which means to open, unconceal and reveal, enliven, and remember (Moules, 2015; Moules et al., 2015).

Thirdly, I consider my beliefs about truth and reality. Though I believe in a Creator who is all-knowing, I believe that truth and reality are far too complex to be captured in a single truth. I come to understand knowledge as deeply interconnected, and interdisciplinary. What can be known is based on our interpretation of the world. Ontologically, I believe that knowledge is inherently subjective. As I seek

to understand the complexity of human beings, I am drawn to methodologies that allow for, even celebrate, complexity.

Finally, I consider the influence of my beliefs about time. Though my colonial upbringing has deeply embedded an understanding of time as linear, through teachings of Indigenous Elders and community members, I have come to understand time as cyclical as well as linear (Deloria, 2007). If time is also viewed as a spiral, events from long ago may be much nearer than they seem from a linear perspective. This understanding of time resonates with my lived experience, ergo, I embrace both a linear and cyclical perspective of time as I consider the past, present, and future possibilities, and complexities of Settler-Indigenous relations.

Research Approach

The topic of my study and the questions that concern me bring me to Indigenous approaches to research. Employing Indigenous methodologies in addressing my research questions provides me with the tools and considerations I need to examine my questions fully and responsibly, respecting Indigenous ways of knowing, being, connecting, and doing (Donald, 2012, Kovach, 2009; University of Calgary, 2017). Māori scholar Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2012) notes that following local cultural protocols, values, and behaviours are integral to Indigenous methodologies. I situate my work in this territory by respecting the protocols and teachings about Territorial Acknowledgements, smudging, offering tobacco, and praying I received from Blackfoot Traditional Knowledge Keeper Adrian Wolfleg of Siksika Nation, Elder Dr. Reg Crowshoe of Piikani Nation, and Elder Duane Mark of the Stoney Nakoda Nation.

As I write through the Settler stories that formed me and write towards transformation, I am drawn to Indigenous Métissage as a method that captures and articulates the layers of relationships, the intricacies of the stories, and movement. I was first introduced to Indigenous Métissage in my first summer of doctoral studies. Through Dwayne Donald's writing about Indigenous Métissage (2009), I became aware of the Settler colonial logics that influence my understanding of Canadian history and the

erasure of Indigenous people in my mind. Though I worked in the area of Indigenous health, I could see with fresh eyes how my Settler view pathologized Indigenous people instead of the Settler colonial system that structures Canadian society. I felt the need to trouble the story I had believed about Indigenous people and heighten my critical consciousness of a particular negativity surrounding Indigenous and Settler relations (Donald, 2012). As an educator who works in Indigenous nursing education, I wanted to pause my work and enact a creative, subversive praxis to help shift and transform my Settler colonial-shaped relationship to people, history, and land (Hasebe-Ludt et al., 2009; MacDonald & Markides, 2018; Tuck, 2016). I began to see Métissage as a way to write through personal and family stories and braid them into the larger national story in provocative and new ways (Blood et al., 2012). This is a hermeneutic endeavour.

Indigenous Métissage

As I consider Métissage as a hopeful narrative practice to help guide my transformation as a Settler, I draw on Hasebe-Ludt et al.'s (2009) description of Métissage as:

a counternarrative to the grand narratives of our times, a site of writing and surviving in the interval between different cultures and languages, particularly in colonial contexts; a way of merging and blurring genres, texts and identities; an active literary stance, political strategy, and pedagogical practice. (p. 9)

The term, Métissage, suggests some degree of mixing or heterogeneity (Donald, 2012; Hasebe-Ludt et al., 2009). More specifically, I am drawn to Indigenous Métissage as understood by Donald. Rather than a picture of post-colonial hybridity or universalized homogenization that erases Indigenous identity in Canada, Indigenous Métissage circumvents colonization's assimilatory forces by paying "closer attention to the particular character of colonial discourses in specific Canadian contexts" (Donald, 2012, p. 541). In Donald's imagination of Indigenous Métissage, particularities of Indigenous places, knowledges, and identities are made visible as they are juxtaposed with the realities of coloniality. Personal and family

stories are textually braided with larger national narratives to draw attention to similarities and differences with the hopes of provoking understanding and new ways of seeing Indigenous and Settler relations. Indigenous Métissage focuses on “interpreting and reconceptualizing the historical and contemporary interactions of Aboriginal peoples and Canadians” (p. 541). Though Indigenous Métissage is to be informed by Indigenous values, ethics, and ways of knowing, this does not limit the practice to Indigenous people (Archibald, 2008; Donald, 2012; Kovach, 2009). However, this type of inquiry is about particular relationships and particular places and must be interpreted in a Canadian context.

Donald (2012) suggests there are many metaphors that inform the research sensibility of Indigenous Métissage. Metaphors can be juxtaposed and then connected through interpretation in a process that attends to the complexities of colonial engagements, prompting shifts in historical consciousness, and enacting ethical relationality. Donald suggests researchers attend to the particularities of place by choosing metaphors that align with the research context. As a scholar working in Blackfoot Territory, the metaphors that I draw upon are connected to place, such as a braid of sweetgrass. To the Blackfoot people, sweetgrass is regarded as holy (Galileo Education Network, n.d.). Marvin Calf Robe Sr. of the Kainai Nation teaches each strand holds meaning: faith, trust, and love. Braided together, sweetgrass symbolizes strength and a positive way forward.

Métissage as Braiding

Indigenous Métissage is both a process and a product, a research sensibility, and a methodology (Donald, 2017). The metaphor of braiding is commonly used to help explain what processes are involved in Métissage work and what the product might look like (Donald, 2012; Hasebe-Ludt et al., 2009). The tangible image of a braid helps me to make sense of this emergent, complex, and adaptive approach to research. I bring disparate elements of text together in ethically relational ways to draw attention to differences and similarities while imagining a better way forward. Donald notes that the researcher or “weaver of the braid must remain mindful that each research context must be explored and evaluated

based on the particular character of the situation” (p. 544). I envision the braid as three-strands that allow stories to be told in linear fashion (in alignment with my Settler sensibilities) while intertwining them in relational ways (in alignment with the Indigenous ways of knowing and being that underpin this study). The metaphors I choose are grounded in the particularities of place and in alignment with images that are meaningful to Indigenous peoples where the stories are from.

Artifacts

To provide an opening into understanding the unique character and complexity of the particular place of concern in the inquiry, Donald (2012) suggests researchers use artifacts that are *indigenous* to the place and hold symbolic yet different meaning to both Indigenous peoples and Settlers. Donald considers artifacts to be products of culture that holds socio-cultural and historical meaning or significance. Doing Indigenous Métissage “involves interpretation of the significance of an artifact to a place by showing how Aboriginal and Canadian perspectives of the artifact and place are both rooted in perspectives of colonial constructs and histories” (p. 543). An artifact might be a natural object such as a rock or an object crafted by humans such as a painting or photograph. The invitation from YMCA to attend the 90th CCH Reunion was an artifact in this study.

Donald (2012) suggests that artifacts and places provide critical starting points for deep interpretations that can be “reread, reframed, and then braided in diverse ways. The focus on particular artifacts associated with specific places causes researchers to closely consider the contextual complexities of Aboriginal and Canadian relations because, by their very nature, they are conspicuous aspects of our shared society” (pp. 545-546). By attending to the difficulties and complexities of the Indigenous and Canadian relationship and acknowledging and comprehending difference, ethical relationality is fostered. I intentionally and thoughtfully chose an artifact as a starting place for reflection and writing. This artifact acted as an entry point to thinking and writing deeply about my Settler story.

Place

In addition to artifacts, Donald (2012) stresses the importance of locating inquiry as Indigenous Métissage in a particular place and context. Indigenous peoples in Canada were displaced from their land through colonization and Indigenous Métissage works to decolonize educative spaces by reclaiming and highlighting the importance of Indigenous relationship to particular places and spaces. Indigenous Métissage is based on the philosophical underpinnings of Plains Cree and Blackfoot teachings and place-based ecological interpretations of ethical relationality (Donald, 2009). A central goal of Indigenous Métissage is to draw attention to place-stories in a way that prompts Settlers to rethink and reframe their understanding of history, place, and Indigenous/Settler relations (Donald, 2012). The place that locates and contextualizes this research is located on Stoney Nakoda land, in a piece of leased property known as Camp Chief Hector.

Ethical Relationality

Donald (2012) acknowledges the importance of ethical relationality when enacting Indigenous Métissage. Ethical relationality is an “ecological understanding of human relationality that does not deny difference but rather seeks to understand more deeply how our different histories and experiences position us in relation to each other” (p. 535). Ermine (2007) conceptualizes this ethical way of relating across difference as ethical space.

It is argued that the ethical space, at the field of convergence for disparate systems, can become a refuge of possibility in cross-cultural relations and the legal order of society, for the effect of shifting the status quo of an asymmetrical social order to a partnership model between world communities. The new partnership model of ethical space, in cooperative spirit between Indigenous peoples and Western institutions, will create new currents of thought that flow in different directions and overrun the old ways of thinking. (p. 203)

The work of Indigenous Métissage, the reflecting on and reframing of complex historical and current relations between Indigenous peoples and Settler Canadians in a way that is more truthful, helps to foster the creation of an ethical space where Indigenous peoples and Settlers can be fully present. As Donald (2009) notes, “if colonialism is indeed a shared condition, then decolonization needs to be a shared endeavour” (p. 5).

Hermeneutic Imagination

Donald (2012) acknowledges the role of hermeneutics in his conceptualization of Indigenous Métissage. Hermeneutics welcomes the “messiness and difficulties of a given situation or context that creates opportunities for new knowledge and understanding to arise...Rather than working to remove ambiguity, hermeneutics works to interpret and give voice to the difficulty and ambiguousness of life itself” (pp. 545-546). Given the complexities, histories, and contexts that inform the relationship between Indigenous people and Settlers in Canada, hermeneutic imagination helps make sense of the ambiguity without attempting to find easy answers. Donald draws on four requirements developed by David G. Smith that must be attended to by researchers engaging in interpretive work: a deep, critical attentiveness to how language is used; a willingness to deconstruct interpretations of the world while proposing creative alternatives for ways of thinking and acting; a historical consciousness and openness to consider how they, as a researcher, are implicated in the research; and a willingness to discover meaning through interpretation rather than simply reporting their findings. Hermeneutic imagination is a creative inquiry that makes meaning tangible in new ways while remaining cognizant of the past, the present context, and the multiplicities of perspectives. This level of attentiveness to the ambiguity and difficulty of life fits well with Indigenous Métissage as it “restores life to its original difficulty. Hermeneutics is an attempt to stick with the original difficulty of life and not to betray it” (Caputo, 1987, p. 1). The past and present relationships between Indigenous peoples and Canadians are restored to their original *difficulty*.

The central difficulty of these relationships stems from the displacement of Indigenous peoples in their own lands and systemic attacks on Indigenous knowledge systems and ways of life justified under the guise of progress, development, and the spread of universalized liberal democratic values. (Donald, 2012, p. 546-547)

Indigenous Métissage is an *imaginative, interpretive sensibility* fueled by the desire to understand and imagine a different way forward; a different way of being in relationship that restores “artifact and place with renewed vitality and significance for both parties” (p. 547). The intention of Indigenous Métissage texts is to inspire readers to examine how they are implicated in their own stories; to seek to understand and make critical connections to the narrative of Canada and transform how they are in relationship.

Self as Research Participant

I came to the decision to choose myself as the sole research participant for this study in my second summer of my doctoral program. During the doctoral course, *Narrative in Place*, I learned about the interconnectivity between personal narrative (which for me is a Settler narrative), place, and ethical relationships. I recognized this in-between place as a potentially generative space for transformation. During the course, I was invited to relate to land as more-than-human. When given an assignment to spend time on the land, I felt compelled to return to Camp Chief Hector to restore my relationship with the land because I had a growing awareness that my experiences at camp violated local Indigenous protocols. This *address* and sense of calling stayed with me and became a basis for this inquiry (Gadamer, 1960/1989). I have a keen interest in reforming my understanding of Canada’s history using my childhood experiences at Camp Chief Hector as an entry point. The reality of this history and the impacts on Indigenous people were hidden by Settler colonial logics that erase the Indigenous perspectives, obscure atrocities, and normalize Settler dominance. I see my own White Settler identity

and my potential for transformation as justification for taking the time to pause and turn the ethnographic lens towards myself (Patel, 2016).

Research Positionality

I was born in Calgary and am a third generation Canadian. My father was born on his family's homestead in Sion, Alberta just days before moving to Beaver Creek, on Vancouver Island, and my mother was born in Ocean Falls, British Columbia. I can trace both family lines to their ancestral roots in Europe. In 2014, as a graduate student in nursing, I began to learn a more truthful narrative of Canada's historical legacy. I replayed the stories in my mind; the stories I had been told about my grandparents. Suddenly, I realized the "boarding schools" were in fact Indian Residential Schools. This realization started me on a journey of deconstruction regarding my White Settler identity and the stories that formed my identity. Though it was painful to admit, I was becoming increasingly aware that the education I had received (from my family, schooling, and society) was neither truthful nor sufficient. My education was underpinned by the assumptions of *terra nullius*, Settler nativism, and Indigenous erasure (Tuck & Yang, 2012). As a nurse educator at the University of Calgary with responsibilities to teach about the legacy of colonization and its impact on Indigenous peoples, I recognize my need for re-education and transformation. As I implement educational programs to teach nursing students, I also see benefit in an intentional *pause* to critically reflect on my story, *who* I am, and *how* I come to the work of reconciliation and decolonizing educative spaces (Patel, 2016).

Research Setting

Since I reflect on my personal story, the main setting for my study is my home office and the *places* connected to my story. My office is a quiet and meditative space where I can reflect and write. I spend time in other settings and sites as triggers to spark both my memory and my ideas. Donald (2012) highlights the need for place-based inquiry that are tied to the physical space, their histories, and stories. I visit these places and learn of their historical value and stories through researching archives,

online and textual resources, and visiting museums. Inspired by the Blackfoot concept of *aoksisowaato'p* to guide my time, I visit these places as an act of relational renewal, seeking the gifts the land has to offer at the time (Blood et al., 2012). I also seek out artifacts that are tied to these places, as “doing Indigenous Métissage requires work with artifact, place, and context in the hope that a story will emerge that will need to be told” (p. 549). I spend this time attempting to shift my relationship with the land.

Practicing Indigenous Métissage

Indigenous Métissage is a flexible approach that adapts and responds to what emerges. Being open and flexible aligns with my beliefs in plurality, transformation, and the importance of ethical relationality. Donald (2012) notes that “Indigenous Métissage is a research sensibility that is against prescribed method, but instead requires *aokakio'ssin* or careful attention to the details of the research context with the hope that a story will arise that will need to be told” (p. 544). However, Donald does suggest that artifacts and place provide critical entry points into meaningful stories about Indigenous/Settler relations and opportunities for “deep interpretations that can be reread, reframed, and then braided in diverse ways” (p. 544). As I consider the Settler stories that bring me to this work, I use artifacts and places as apertures for this inquiry, in particular, Camp Chief Hector.

Data Generation

In many ways, data generation in Indigenous Métissage is an organic process that is interconnected with and inseparable from interpretation (Donald, 2017). In my writing, I took purposeful steps such as: (1) offering tobacco and praying in accordance to the teaching I received from Blackfoot Elder Adrian Wolfleg, (2) choosing a place that is significant to my Settler story, (3) researching about the site to learn its history from both a colonial and Indigenous perspective, (4) spending time at a site of significance, reflecting on the significance of the place to my Settler story and to Indigenous history, (5) choosing an artifact of significance to the Settler story, (6) writing field notes during my time

visiting the sites, and (7) writing in a reflective journal about my thoughts, reactions, assumptions, beliefs, and responses. I intentionally prepared myself for the writing process and took time to note my reactions, particularly areas of openness and resistance.

Gathering Evidence

Indigenous Métissage does not have a set formula or approach, nor a delineated stage of data collection and interpretation (Donald, 2012; 2017). However, it is important to articulate the approach I undertake to gather data.

Documents

I collected a variety of documents: photographs, newspaper articles, and historical documents from multiple colonial and Indigenous sources that tell the Settler stories of my experience at Camp Chief Hector as a child.

Field Notes and Journaling

I maintained a daily journaling practice to record self-observations and self-reflective data. My field notes consist of journal entries, notes from my time spent on the land, and jotted notes throughout my research process. I used the self-reflective data as a means to locate myself within the story of my experiences at camp, society, and history (Hasebe-Ludt et al., 2009). I also used the self-reflective data as a means of recording my reactions and transformations. I was interested in the ways embodied narrative practices act as facilitators to my self-discovery and transformation and the ways my White Settler identity acts as a barrier to transformation. These documents did not directly transfer word-for-word into my writing; however, they inform my textual narratives.

Document Analysis

Data analysis and interpretation are difficult to separate from data gathering in Indigenous Métissage because interpretation begins at the point the researcher decides what to write and how. Despite this, I engaged in document analysis to analyze photographs, relevant newspaper articles, and

historical documents that inform my textual narratives. I used Maccarella's (2019) three step process: summarize, analyze, and criticize. Through this process, I considered why the document matters and I critically analyzed the source and its relationship to the context from which it came. I am particularly interested in the ways White Settler identity, Indigenous identity, and the land are present, absent, and shaped through discourses. Thus, I attended to both what is said and not said in the documents, particularly as it related to Indigenous and Settler understanding of historical events, relationships, and place.

I also drew on Moules et al.'s (2015) suggestion that "good interpretive work should disclose something about the meaningful existence of the interpreter and the world" (p. 119) with the goals of deepening understanding and changing practice. Interpretive analysis is a deliberate attempt to listen for particulars of experience and thoughts, involving rich descriptions, exemplars, and counter-stories. It is both deconstructive and reconstructive, highlighting questions about how and why things have come to be what they are while also opening up new possibilities for a better way forward.

Field Notes

I engaged in interpretative analysis within my field notes. They provided the place where I work with the documents and possible interpretations arising from these that "allow the reader some recognition of how the interpreter arrived at the interpretations and to show that they are not just "made up" but came from somewhere, something, and someone" (Moules et al., 2015, p. 131). Maintaining an openness to possibilities provides the basis of interpretive analysis as I lean into the idea that, "we never come to thoughts. They come to us," (Heidegger, 1971/2001, p. 6).

Story Writing

To produce narrative texts, I spent time reflecting, imagining, and writing through the stories. In many ways, interpretation begins with story writing; the stories and accounts I chose to write, the techniques I employed, and the language I used. I draw on Richardson and St. Pierre's (2005) practice of

story writing as “honoring the location of the self” through creative, critically reflexive narratives that “can evoke deeper parts of the self, heal wounds, enhance sense of self—or even alter one’s sense of identity” (pp. 1419-1420).

Denzin (2014) suggests writers consider four issues when approaching storytelling as research: sense-making, representation, legitimation, and desire. Sense-making describes “how the writer moves from and through field notes into the actual writing process (into the research and interpretive texts), making decisions about what will be written about, what will be included, and how it will be represented” (p. 572). Representation speaks to issues of voice, audience, and the ways the author is placed in the text. Denzin draws on bell hooks’ relation to Other; the choices that are made regarding speaking about or for the Other and the use of silence or absence to draw attention to the Other. The issue of legitimation centers on matters of epistemology, authority, and credibility. I consider issues of reliability and validity that are congruent with the Indigenous epistemology from which I align. The final issue is desire or vitality of the text. Denzin notes that a vital text grips the reader and invites them to engage with the subject matter. As I approach the writing process, I consider the ways I come to make sense of my story, the voices I use (and the absences), the ways I address credibility, and how I engage myself and the reader in the important topic of White Settler identity.

I write through the areas of significance to my Settler story using approaches articulated by Donald (2012). I rewrite and rewrite the stories, editing them in a process of refinement and analysis. I remain open to understandings throughout my writing process.

Three Strands

Like individual strands of hair that form a braid, the three strands that comprise the braid are as follows: (1) relational renewal with place or *aoksisowaato’p* (Blood et al., 2012); (2) life writing (Chambers et al., 2009; Hasebe-Ludt et al., 2009); and (3) cultural and historical perspectives (Donald, 2012).

Strand One: Aoksisowaato'p

The late Narcisse Blood, a scholar and ceremonialist from Kainai Nation, and his colleagues (2012) refer to the Blackfoot concept *aoksisowaato'p* as a guiding principle for personally and intimately connecting with the land and stories linked to specific places. *Aoksisowaato'p* refers to the “ethical importance of visiting a place as an act of relational renewal that is life-giving and life-sustaining, both to the place and to ourselves” (p. 48). As I consider ways to transform my White Settler identity and way of relating to land as property, I am drawn to this concept as an approach to Indigenous Métissage. I want to learn the stories of each place and come to know the place. Colonialism severs the connections between people and place, so I want to counter this troubling legacy by rebuilding my relationship with land. I offer tobacco when I visit the land, spend time with the land, and write through my experiences. I am hopeful that being on the land and learning its stories are transformative for me and that my narrative accounts prompt transformation in myself and its readers. I come expectantly.

Strand Two: Life Writing

Inspired by the work of Ted T. Aoki and the concept of lived/living curriculum, life writing is a textual practice that uses creative, contemplative approaches to autobiographical writing (Hasebe-Ludt et al., 2009). Life writing includes a mix of genres such as memoir, poetry, poetic prose, story, journaling, essay, and letters (Hasebe-Ludt et al, 2009). I am drawn to this style of writing inquiry because it promotes a generative space where I can come to locate myself within the worlds I inhabit – to better understand who I am and how I am in relation to others in the world (Hasebe-Ludt et al., 2009). Using reflective writing, I pay attention to my life and chronical it in different ways with the purpose of understanding myself as a part of a network of ethical relations (Donald, 2017).

I imagine the process of life writing to be much like the slow, careful, purposeful act of brushing out a long section of hair. As a brush traces and retraces the lines of the hair, not pulling too hard or forcing the brush through messy knots, I use text to trace and retrace my childhood stories at CCH,

attending to my own Settler education “to better understand who and how [I am] in relation to others in the world” (Hasebe-Ludt et al., 2009, p. 3). As I reflect on the experiences at CCH that have shaped my understanding of myself as a Settler, I begin to form individual stories. I blend fictional and non-fictional elements, dialogue between characters, and descriptions of setting and plot to bring the stories to life (Hasebe-Ludt et al., 2009). I attend to kin, kinship relations, real and imagined places, landscapes, cultural worlds within which we live our lives. I locate myself within the Settler story of Canada, drawing attention to the colonial logics that have shaped me and influenced my relationship with Indigenous people and their history (Donald, 2012).

Strand Three: Cultural and Historical Perspectives

In one of his first published articles about Indigenous Métissage, Donald (2009) warns of the consequences of Settler’s living from a reductive national narrative of Canada that positions Indigenous people as outsiders. This idealized conceptualization of Canadian history weighs heavily on Indigenous people by maintaining colonial logics and perpetuating the myth of *terra nullius*. In this strand, I attend to cultural and historical stories that reframe my understanding of Canada’s history and foster a renewed openness to seeing Indigenous people. Drawing from Maccarella’s (2009) three-step approach to document analysis, I summarize, analyze, and criticize historical records such as archival documents, photographs, stories, and essays from both Settler and Indigenous sources to help me build a foundation for stories about Settler/Indigenous relations. I include public documents from the University archives, museums, the Internet, and sites such as Blackfoot Crossing. I consider and contrast Settler and Indigenous understanding and relationship to land. Returning to the image of brushing out long hair before braiding, I slowly and purposefully retrace the story of Camp Chief Hector, including the historical and cultural context.

Preparing to Braid

Denzin (2014) suggests that writing is simultaneously an act of interpretation and method. Sense-making or interpretation begins at the point when the qualitative researcher makes the difficult decision on what and how to write through their thoughts and impressions, their field notes, documents, and experiences. With Indigenous Métissage, writings are revisited, and texts are selected and braided in such a way as to “highlight both points of affinity and dissonance. The braiding becomes an interpretation of the narratives as well as a form of representation and reporting of the research” (Hasebe-Ludt et al., 2009, p. 9). Hasebe-Ludt et al. note that themes arise organically throughout the writing process and during the thoughtful process of juxtaposing various writing techniques and strategies, affinities, and differences, particularly when remaining mindful of “differences in context, history, and memory” (p. 9).

For the first stage of my braid, I revisited the writings I created; I reread them, pondered them, and attended to resonances and differences. As I reread the pieces of writing, I considered what ideas echo, challenge, resonate, stay with me, or fall away. I listened to my embodied reaction- to emotions, tensions, revelations, and movements, and I took note of particular points of affinity or dissonance within and between different written pieces (Hasebe-Ludt et al., 2009). It is at this point that I engaged *hermeneutic imagination* to help me imagine creative ways of juxtaposing and mixing the texts with the goal to understand more deeply Indigenous and Settler relations (Donald, 2012). I traced the *hermeneutic circle* many times as I deconstructed and reconstructed an interpretive account.

Braiding the Texts

In Métissage, the author skillfully and mindfully juxtaposes and mixes narratives and texts to create a novel text that is stronger and more complex than the individual stories and narratives (Hasebe-Ludt et al., 2009); “such stories demonstrate that relationality and difference can be productively held in tension” (Donald, 2012; p. 548). In the second stage of my analysis, I created three main pieces of

writing out of the different storied accounts and pieces of writing. I visualized the Métissage process as a three-stranded braid. I experimented with sections of narrative texts, interweaving between stories like a braid. I used different fonts to indicate which story is being told. I wanted to create the Métissage braid, focused on the Settler stories that have formed my identity as a Settler (my childhood experience at camp). I purposefully interwove sections of text from the three stranded writing pieces (relational renewal of place, life writing, and historical) in a way to highlight points of affinity and dissonance. The braiding becomes “an interpretation of the narratives as well as a form of representation and reporting of the research” (Hasebe-Ludt et al., 2009, p. 9).

Criteria for Evaluation

Since I engaged in Indigenous Métissage as my research practice, it is important that I also align my evaluation criteria with Indigenous methodologies. In her discussion about research validity and credibility, Kovach (2009) draws on the question posed by Indigenous Elders who inform and guide her work: *Are you doing this in a good way? Are you speaking the truth?* To do this, Kovach suggests, “to tend to the process in a good way, so that no matter the outcome you can sleep at night because you did right by the process” (p. 52). Kovach encourages researchers to use accessible language and to represent findings of research in story. This aligns well with my choice to use story and locally and acceptable recognizable metaphors. I also ensure that I locate myself in relation to others throughout my work.

Given that Indigenous Métissage is a creative, narrative, textual practice that draws on a hermeneutic imagination, I draw on the criteria of rigour in research described by Moules et al. (2015). Using a hermeneutical approach, Moules et al. considers the criteria of validation, veracity, and transferability when appraising hermeneutic research. Ethical validation is an “appraisal of whether the research findings inform and transform practice and assist us in doing things differently” (p. 173). While substantive validation is “grounded in the ways in which the research accounts for prior research and

theory, self-reflexivity, and popular, political, and personal understanding” (p. 173). Veracity of hermeneutic work refers to the credibility of the accounts. Given that I draw from my own memory, camp stories, and archival records, I created accurate versions of the stories, ensuring that the storylines, characters, and language used are as credible as possible. Though generalizability is often a criterion for evaluation of research, Moules et al. suggest transferability is more appropriate for hermeneutics-based studies. Transferability considers how the findings of the research can apply to contexts outside the study situation. By using evocative, compelling language to describe my Settler CCH narratives – the settings, relationships, and stories, I invite the reader “to enter into, engage with, experience or connect with” my story and find resonances with their own story (Le Roux, 2017, p. 2014). This “ringing of truth” may lead the reader to recognize a sense of kinship or affinity with the interpretations whereby the interpretations speak to them in a way that feels valid and recognizable (Moules et al., 2015). Moules et al. suggest rigid and inflexible adherence to method is replaced by “careful attention to the treatment of topics such that the work engenders trustworthiness and believability” (p. 172).

Ethical Considerations

It is often thought that since life writing is essentially a self-study, it does not impose harm or cross established ethical boundaries (Denzin, 2014; Hasebe-Ludt et al., 2009). However, since stories are constructed using social interactions with others, ethical considerations must be acknowledged. I must consider the ethical perspectives of the people who are factored into the creation of my stories, ensuring that no harm towards myself or others arises from the data (Kovach, 2009). I choose to tell my own story because the topic of White Settler identity is sensitive. Although I include identifiable information for the Indigenous-themed camp where I spent each summer as a child, I refrained from using identifiable traits of people in the narratives. I purposefully keep the name of staff members and other secondary characters involved anonymous and I do not include dates, and descriptions. I use

publicly accessible information about the camp and archival information in addition to my memory and imagination. My intention is to provide the reader with a sense of the camping experience rather than focus on individuals.

Potential Risks or Benefits to Self

Writing about my White Settler identity and my transforming relationship to self, history, society, and the land was emotionally draining. I experienced a range of emotions as I revisited my memories from camp and reviewed historical documents. Although the emotions were challenging to face, I wrote through my emotional response instead of backing away from the emotions. Instead of shying away from topics that elicited anger or silence anger, educators in anti-racist educative spaces must develop tools for embracing emotion (Archibald, 2008; Boler, 1999). Learning in anti-racism is messy and disruptive because the knowledge, particularly about identities “resides in the body and cultural memory” (Dei, 2005, p. 8). I used a reflexive journal and debriefing with a confidante as a means of mitigating harm to self.

Limitations and Delimitations

Limitations

Given the ways Indigenous Métissage draws on a hermeneutic imagination, the limitations of this study may align with those commonly found in hermeneutics. Hermeneutic research is an interpretive approach that seeks to understand rather than explain (Laing et al., 2020). Moules et al. (2015) suggest this approach is often constrained by its openness to possibilities and resistance to solid conclusions.

I hope that readers feel they are invited to think *with* my story. I hope it might be an aperture or starting point for their own reflection on their identity and place in Canada, particularly if they are Settlers. Readers might have a very different lived experience than mine. I use the term Settler to describe myself and my position within Canada. Some readers may find this label to be offensive as it

might not resonate with them. Some Canadians might view themselves as benign newcomers or they may draw on Settler nativism (Wolfe, 2006) and consider discussions about White Settler identity as irrelevant and something we should move beyond. In order to make my writing accessible, I intentionally use language and vocabulary that communicates and connects to a broader audience.

This study is also limited by precautions put in place due to a global pandemic. I was not able to access documents from archives and museums that are closed due to the lockdown restrictions. For the historical documents I could access, I realize that their scope is limited. Myriad stories remain untold and those that are may be less accurate representations of history, particularly those about Indigenous history when told from Settler perspectives (Maccarella, 2019). When I made decisions about what documents and stories to analyze or include in my study, I recognized that I am doing so as a Settler. I cannot lose my Settler lens through which I interpret the world. Given this, I critically reflected on my decisions and use an audit trail to document my decisions. I was able to meet with an Elder and draw on teachings I received from Traditional Knowledge Keepers and Elders prior to lockdown but I was not able to visit them to seek specific guidance due to the restrictions; however, I did reach out to them via email and Zoom.

Delimitations

I am delimiting my study to the examination of Settler and Indigenous history from my own Settler perspective with the goal of my own transformation. I am choosing a critical pedagogical lens through which to view this study (Freire, 1970/2000) because Freire's call to the oppressor resonates with me and helps me to grow in my understanding of my White Settler identity. I am also choosing Indigenous Métissage over another methodology that would allow for different questions to be answered about the same topic. Indigenous Métissage is a research practice that speaks specifically to the Canadian context; about local places and artifacts; about the relationship between Indigenous people and non-Indigenous people in Canada; and the relationship between humans and the more-

than-human (Donald, 2012). Indigenous Métissage is a research practice that can handle the complexities inherent in these relationships while also providing imagination and hope for transformation.

Conclusion

As I consider the challenges of engaging in a relational, interpretive, research praxis that challenged me to rethink my identity and my way of being in the nation of Canada, I am encouraged by the words of Donald (2012):

Doing Indigenous Métissage requires work with artifact, place, and context in the hope that a story will emerge that will need to be told. To weave this story requires a provocative juxtaposition of Aboriginal and Canadian standpoints to bring about a shift in the critical consciousness of writer and reader, storyteller and listener. Such relationality needs to happen in theory because it has not been perceived and appreciated in the daily interactions and practices of living together in this place we call Canada. It has been concealed by colonial frontier logics. We must first reread and reframe colonial constructs in order to see more clearly the language and logics that have clouded our thinking. Such theorizing will help deconstruct the colonial frontier logics of inside/outsider and facilitate meaningful reconstruction through sustained engagement that traverse perceived civilizational divides. Only then will the stories linking Aboriginal peoples and Canadians revitalize relationships with a common sense of place. (pp. 549-550)

The goal of Indigenous Métissage is to tell a more truthful account of Canadian history and of the current state, particularly in light of the ways these stories impact Indigenous people. As Thomas King (2003) writes, “history may well be a series of stories we tell about the past, but the stories are not just any stories. They’re not chosen by chance” (p. 3). In many ways, these stories form us and shape how we relate to the world around us (Donald, 2012). By examining my childhood experiences at CCH, I

uncover the hidden curriculums and colonial structures that maintain Settler dominance over Indigenous people and lands in Canada.

Chapter 4

Braiding Camp

In his article, *Indigenous Métissage: A Decolonizing Research Sensibility*, Donald (2012) described Indigenous Métissage as a research praxis emerging “parallel to the personal and ongoing inquiries into historic and current relations connecting Aboriginal people and Canadians in the place now called Canada” (p. 533). This type of inquiry invites the scholar to tell personal stories alongside historic and current context, “to braid ‘dangerous stories’ that tell difficult truths about living within compromised and compromising institutional systems with stories about personal journeys that open up to the precariousness of our lives within familiar and ancestral relations” (Chambers et al., 2012, p. xxiii). In this chapter, I take up Indigenous Métissage with the hopes of revisiting stories from my childhood experiences at an Indigenous-themed summer camp. I consider the difficult truths about being formed by the compromised and compromising institution of camp. By braiding together these difficult stories and their historical and current contexts, I seek to better understand how this camping experience formed my White Settler identity and my responsibilities for renewing my relationship with Indigenous people and to the land.

Indigenous Métissage “requires dedication to the reciprocating interpretive process and attentiveness to the insights that arise from it” and “*aokakio’ssin*, or careful attention to the details of the research context with the hope that a story will arise that will need to be told” (Donald, 2012, p. 544). As I spent time reflecting on memories and photographs from my eleven years at summer camp, I found this to be true. A story, filled with the sights, smells, and emotions of my childhood, arose within me. When I re-visited the tipi site, the place where the story was set, I was struck by how accurately the story captured my childhood self. As I sat on the tipi floor and the smoke from the smudge wafted over my head, heart, and hands, the world of my childhood and my adult self, came together in ceremony and prayer. In hermeneutics, interpretation “involves carefully opening up associations that strengthen

understanding of the topic,” where something about both the interpreter and the world are disclosed (Moules et al., 2015, p. 117). Throughout this chapter, I move between my childhood self and my adult self, the historical and current contexts, giving careful attention to the convergences and divergences and humbly offer an interpretation. As Gadamer contends, memory is part of experience, which he calls *Erlebnis*. As such, “Everything that is experienced is experienced by oneself, and part of its meaning is that it belongs to the unity of this self and thus contains an unmistakable and irreplaceable relation to the who of this one life” (1960/1989, p. 67). That is, what was in the past is not over and done with. Rather it remains “fused with the whole movement of life and constantly accompanies it” (p. 67). In this way, the movement between my childhood self and my adult self is one and the same in experience.

Donald (2012) emphasizes the importance of metaphors for informing Indigenous Métissage and “bringing an imaginative conceptual language to describe the quality, character, and movement of the research process” (p. 543). In this chapter, I take up three metaphors to help elucidate meaning: braiding, camp, and erasure. The metaphor of a braid helps me to make sense of this emergent, complex, and adaptive approach to research. I bring disparate elements of experience together in ethically relational ways to draw attention to differences and similarities while imagining a better way forward. This process is made more tangible when expressed as a concrete image. The metaphor of camp is powerful because it conjures up many conflicting images of the colonizer and colonized. While summer camp in the Canadian imagination is a benign, helpful force to influence and benefit generations of many young people, it is a predominately White space where colonizing forces are very much at play (Shore, 2020). In this account, I consider the impact of Camp Chief Hector (CCH) on my White Settler formation and its exclusionary and exploitative relationship with the Stoney Nakoda Nation. The metaphor of erasure helps me to understand how camp acted as a colonizing force, working to erase Indigenous people from my childhood consciousness and facilitated the removal of Indigenous people from the land.

I bring the metaphors to the weaving of the strands: place, practices, and the historical perspective. I returned to the place, Camp Chief Hector, which held such importance to me as a child, in undergoing the work of claiming and reclaiming self. Drawing on the work of Narcisse Blood and the concept of *aoksisowaato'p*, I consider the “ethical importance of visiting a place as an act of relational renewal that is life-giving and life-sustaining, both to the place and to ourselves” (Blood et al., 2012, p. 48). The second strand is where I describe my first experience of Grand Council as a child, and the practices at camp that shaped my White Settler identity. In the third strand, I attend to the cultural and historical context of Camp Chief Hector, situating it in the larger colonial project of Canada as a Settler nation state. In doing so, I recognize,

The horizon of the present is continually in the process of being formed because we are continually having to test all our prejudices. An important part of this testing occurs in encountering the past and in understanding the tradition from which we come. Hence the horizon of the present cannot be formed without the past. There is not more an isolated horizon of the present in itself than there are historical horizons which have to be acquired. *Rather understanding is always the fusion of these horizons supposedly existing by themselves* [italics in original]. (Gadamer 1995, p. 306)

To make visible the braid, I weave together my reflection of my time re-visiting the place of camp (designated by standard Calibri type font) with more personal stories and interpretive passages (designated by *italicized type font*); and the historical perspective (designated by **Calibri bold font**). The layering of texts, the juxtapositions, and interpretations are intentional, revealing the synergies and tensions, divergencies and convergences in form, context, and concepts.

I started this project to better understand my Settler colonial upbringing and the ways experiences like summer camp formed my identity. An advertisement posted on Facebook for the CCH 90th anniversary reunion was a well-timed invitation to revisit camp. Its profile drawing of Chief Hector

Crawler beside Mount Yamnuska provided “an aperture into the unique character and complexity of the particular place of concern” (Donald, 2012, p. 542). The familiar drawing was imbued with meaning to me as an adult who spent childhood summers at the camp but now conceptualized my camping experiences in light of a growing awareness of the impacts of colonization on Indigenous people in Canada. I wondered how this invitation, a product of culture filled with meaning and significance, would be understood by the ancestors of Chief Hector Crawler, the people of the Stoney Nakoda Nation. Such an inquiry involves “interpretation of the significance of an artifact to a place by showing how Aboriginal and Canadian perspectives of the artifact and place are both rooted in perspectives of colonial constructs and histories. They are simultaneously and paradoxically antagonistic and conjoined” (p. 543).

Place: The Invitation

The invitation to the reunion became an aperture or opening into my inquiry. Having attended CCH for eleven summers as a child, I wondered if the adult me would be able to recognize the camp preserved in my memory. Given my past experiences at camp where I participated in what I now know to be fake ‘Indian’ ceremonies, I felt compelled to return to the place, to the land and make amends for the ways I had violated the land’s protocols. In many ways, I carried a weight of shame, made heavier by my growing understanding of the true nature of camp and how it departed from the beauty and richness of Stoney Nakoda culture. I was a child when I first attended Camp Chief Hector. I participated in all that the camp had to offer, believing fully that what I was experiencing was real. Upon visiting with Alice Kaquitts, a Stoney Nakoda Elder, and telling her of my misgivings, she assured me that it was natural for me to enjoy camp, as children connect to the land freely and beautifully (personal communication, January 25, 2022). However, my limited capacity for agency and choice didn’t lessen the impact of my actions. I participated in and benefited from the infliction of colonial harm. As an adult, I was responsible to return and make amends. Alice assured me that I could

have a child-like connection to the land once again, but this time it would be real. Since the place of camp was on Stoney Nakoda land⁶, I longed to return in a manner that aligned with the teachings I had received over the past few years from Elders Duane Mark, Tina Fox, and Alice Kaquitts. I did not feel confident I could adequately live out what I had been taught, but I knew I could move forward with humility and an open heart. Sadly, the reunion was canceled due to provincial COVID-19 precautions, however when I told the director about my research project, she invited me to visit camp.

Camp Chief Hector is located on the northern edge of the Bow Valley Provincial Park under the shadow of Mount Baldy⁷, across the Trans-Canada Highway from the Stoney Nakoda Nation. As I drove up the long winding road toward main camp, my mind revisited the many times I sat belted to the sweaty bench seat of the old Buick station wagon ready to burst with anticipation while my parents drove far too slowly the last kilometres to camp. Now, as I drove the final curves of the road and pulled into the parking lot just off the main field, I felt slowed by a weighty sense of purpose and anticipation. It felt surreal to return after thirty years. The buildings looked familiar, but slightly smaller than I remembered.

I planned to visit the tipi site where I spent three summers as a child; the one my memory took me to when I revisited camp in my mind. As I walked across the main field and down the path towards the tipi, my child and adult self merged in that moment of shared familiarity. Though the tipi platform and poles stood erect but bare in preparation for winter, my mind imagined light grey canvas covering

⁶ The region was Stoney Nakoda land prior to the signing of Treaty 7. Although it is legally owned by the Province of Alberta, I consider it to be stolen land from the Stoney Nakoda Nation.

⁷ The mountain to the south of camp has many names. On maps it is often called Yates Mountain or Lookout Mountain. The Stoney Nakoda name the mountain *Tokyapebi Ipa*, or “Lookout Point for the Enemy”. At CCH, it was called Mount Baldy despite an adjacent mountain with the same name.

the frame. I pictured the smoke flap poles leaning outward to allow the smoke to rise from the firepit through the gaping smoke hole. Closing my eyes, I could hear the rustle of sleeping bags and feel the cool, clear night when I first attended Grand Council.

Practices: The Erasure Begins

Night fell and darkness surrounded us much like it had for the past dozen days, yet something felt different. We fell silent in anticipation, hushed less by any word or look, but by the solemnity of the impending events. We were Mistayans; this was our first year and we knew the last night of camp held mystery. The older girls wouldn't breathe a word, but their eyes spoke that this was a sacred night. A hush fell over our group of normally giddy 10-year-old girls as we sat on the edges of our bunk beds, metal coils straining and squeaking and polyester sleeping bags crinkling under our shifting weight. The normally glowing fire pit in the middle of the tipi sat silent, despite the cool air and darkness. We were waiting for something unusual. I was not sure what exactly, but I felt certain I would know it when it happened.

A loud call cut through the dark night air. I froze. This was it; what we had been waiting for. The haunting call electrified the air, causing young girls to slide quickly from their upper bunks and grasp hold of their folded blankets. The leaders wrapped blankets over their own shoulders, but their stern looks of rebuke reminded us to carry the blanket and not wear them. Solemn, we made our way to the door, ducking through the hole of our canvas tipi and out into the dark night. Single file, in silence, we made our way along the path to the open field. Despite the darkness, lines of children were just visible filing out of tipis scattered throughout the wooded landscape. There was nary a light among us.

Again, the loud call beckoned us to the open field. I could make out the sounds- “YO-SIC-A-MOUS-BACK-SCHMIM⁸” and a much quieter call echoed in the distance. Lights danced ahead, contrasting to the pitch-black night. As we drew nearer, we spotted a bareback rider with a torch held up high. The horse danced, energized by the same electric anticipation that ran through our young bodies. Though the night was cold, the rider wore only buckskin pants. His dark, painted chest and face contrasted with his white flashing eyes. Without a word of instruction, the lines of children formed in single file behind the rider. I wished we were further back in line, but I found myself so close I could smell the rank odour of days old sweat mixed with horse dung emanating from the mystery rider. The rider coaxed his horse forward and without a word we followed, single file, one foot in front of the other- as we had been taught. We followed across the field, a path taking us to a part of the woods I had never ventured. Lighted bowls flickered on either side of the path up ahead, guiding us like beacons. The consistent sounds of shifting feet of a hundred silenced children through wooded pathways was just loud enough to dampen the sounds I could feel in my body. Rhythmic drumming felt in my bones soon apparent to all who ventured through the woods. I swallowed hard, wondering with anticipation what lay ahead. My eyes caught the shifting figures dancing in the woods just off the path, spinning and twisting to the rhythm of the drumming. It felt otherworldly.

A Colonial Project: Playing Indian

Camp Chief Hector was an Indigenous-themed camp started by the Young Men’s Christian Association (YMCA) in the 1930s (YMCA, 2005). Like many other North American summer camps of that era, it was part of a larger, evolving colonial project started in the 1920s and enabled by appropriation of Indigenous land and culture (Shore, 2020). A critical examination of the colonial

⁸ YMCA. (1980). *Camp Chief Hector 50 Years of Leadership in camping song book*. <http://cchgolidentipi.ca/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/Song-Book.pdf>

underpinnings and assumptions of the camping movement in general and CCH specifically, highlight the ways camp contributed to the formation of White Settler colonial identity and the erasure of Indigenous people.

The Indigenous-themed camping movement in North America was heavily influenced by Ernest Thompson Seton, a Canadian naturalist and storyteller (Wall, 2005). Seton, an anti-modernist, created the Woodcraft Indian movement in the early 1900s as a way to combat what he saw as the negative impacts of industrial capitalism on children (Deloria, 1998; Strong, 2009). He viewed the individualistic culture and civilization of Whiteman to be essentially material in nature and selfish in its quest for property, while he revered the Indigenous culture as being fundamentally spiritual and better aligned with pure religion and worship of God (Seton & Seton, 1937). Seton appropriated an idealized version of primitive pan-Indigenous culture, stories, song, and language and created a program to counter the damages done by modern society on White Settler children (Shore, 2020). His Woodcraft Indians Guides were widely circulated, influencing generations of camps such as Camp Chief Hector (Mullins et al., 2015; Shore, 2020; Tierney & YMCA, 1980).

In his work, *Playing Indian*, Lakota scholar, Philip Deloria (1998) suggested the appropriation of ceremony, costumes, and practices as taken up at children's summer camps, equated to the performance of Indianness. This practice, he noted, helped to form Settler colonial identity by perpetuating the idea that Indigenous people were vanishing from society, and their culture must be kept alive by Settlers who adopt their identity. Rather than truly learning from Indigenous people and respectfully following their cultural protocols, mock-Indigenous traditions taught White-Settler campers that Indigenous communities existed only in the historic past (Shore, 2020). Further, it is troubling to consider that "as white campers played at being Indian, contemporary Native children were targets of aggressive campaigns aimed to rid them of their Indian-ness" (Wall, 2005, p. 539). Pauline Strong (2009), a White Settler scholar, suggested the use of rituals and attire from Indigenous

cultures at summer camp raises uncomfortable questions about the assumptions that undergird such practices and the ways they perpetuate racist stereotypes, hierarchies, and support societal movements towards the erasure of Indigenous culture.

Sense-Making: Playing Indian

The bareback rider with his torch upheld, calling out into the dark night, and the leaders, with blankets wrapped around their shoulders while forbidding us to do the same, felt as if patterned after ceremonies passed down through the generations, creating a sense of reverence and mystery that spoke to my young, eager heart. I felt honoured to participate in the solemn traditions. Little did I know at the time, I had been seduced to partake in a mock ceremony, shaped after Seton's Woodcraft Indian Program (Deloria, 1998; Strong, 2009). My child-self believed what camping leaders told me, that the ceremony and language were authentic to the late Chief Hector's culture. However, the mock-Indigenous ceremonies were instead dramatized ceremonies and practices, culturally appropriated, misrepresentations of Indigenous culture. It was not even that they were misrepresentations of any particular Indigenous community; rather, they were appropriated and then generalized as incorrect stereotyped versions of Indigenous culture, known as pan-Indigeneity. Pan-Indigenous is a term used to describe the acts of non-Indigenous people appropriating ceremonies, sweats, and other cultural protocols without their approval or formal process (Haig-Brown, 2010). However, whether facsimiles of the ceremonies of the Stoney Nakoda people or a homogenized panning across Indigenous cultures, the practice of appropriation is a violation. The word appropriate is from the French word "appropre," meaning to make something the private property of anyone, to claim it as one's own (Oxford University Press, n.d.). Much as the YMCA leaders sought Indigenous land for themselves, they appropriated cultural practices, disregarding the impact on Indigenous people. Rather than spiritual leaders from the Stoney Nakoda people leading the ceremonies, in ways that could draw our attention to the depth and beauty of their culture, we were given a false substitute conducted by those who did not have the rights

to perform such ceremonies. Learning about Indigenous culture requires relationship and time spent engaging with people from the nation; it requires acknowledging their existence (Haig-Brown, 2010; Snow, 2005). As a camper, I saw little to no evidence that the Stoney Nakoda Nation people were present, instead they were presented like museum characters from the past. The mock ceremonies, led by leaders, dressed in appropriated regalia, and painted red, taught me that Indigenous cultures were vestiges from the past and we needed to play-act. By playing Indian, the leaders enacted the vanishing Indian trope, demonstrating that it was the White person's responsibility to take their place. By following the pan-Indigenous teachings that had no connection to actual Indigenous people or culture, the Stoney Nakoda people were erased from our consciousness.

*Now, as an adult, re-turning to the camp, I felt at times like my child-self and my adult-self merged; like I could feel the two worlds at once. This lived experience of time contradicted my Western understanding of time as linear. I wondered how an event from over thirty years ago could be felt so vividly in the present. In his book, *God is Red*, Lakota scholar, Vine Deloria Jr. (2003) noted that Indigenous cultures conceptualize time as circular in contrast with a Western, colonial understanding of time as linear. A circular understanding of time means that events from the past may be much closer, or adjacent to the current moment. While I smudged and prayed in ceremony, as I had been taught by Elders Duane Mark and Adrian Wolfleg, I could sense the reverberations of my childhood experiences into the present moment. On a broader scale, I could see the impact of colonial practices across the generations at work in not only me and all the other campers, but also in the lives of the Stoney Nakoda. The YMCA leaders' decisions from the 1930s, to exclude and exploit the nation, felt near and impactful on the present, as shared by Alice Kaquitts in her stories about camp (personal communication, January 25, 2022). While I could see the impacts of colonialism through time, I wondered if acts of truth-telling and reconciliation could translate into life-giving and life-sustaining acts of renewal to those impacted by Seton's Indigenous-themed camp, Camp Chief Hector.*

The YMCA Camp, Seton's legacy (2005), was founded on a Western conceptualization of Christian beliefs and principles; an understanding of faith that has been dislocated and disconnected from the land and place from which it originated (Deloria, 2013). Vine Deloria Jr. suggests Indigenous spirituality is bound to specific places and cannot be properly understood apart from its connection to place. He notes that non-Indigenous people often fail to understand the importance of place when trying to understand Indigenous spirituality. Given that Indigenous beliefs are connected to a particular place, pan-Indigeneity, which is devoid of this connection, is particularly troublesome (Treat & Deloria, 2013). Perhaps it was the CCH leader's misunderstanding of Indigenous spirituality, as influenced by their Westernized Christian beliefs, that may have facilitated their acceptance of a pan-Indigenous spirituality. It could have also been part of the erasure of Indigenous peoples' cultures and ways of knowing and being part of a concerted colonial effort to Christianize their nation during the early days of camp (Snow, 2006; YMCA, 2005).

As I consider reconciling my relationship to land, I am challenged by this notion of a placed-based belief. As a Christian myself, I can see how my beliefs and ways of knowing are not connected to a specific place. As I compare my spiritual experiences and practices with those of Indigenous Elders I have worked with, I see how my understanding of spirituality is lacking, even anemic. A place-based conceptualization of spirituality pushes against my Western, Christian sensibilities, but I am eager and open to learn and grow. I am committed to applying the concepts I have learned from local Stoney Nakoda Elders when I spend time seeking to renew my relationship to the land. As I ponder this fundamental difference between Western Christian beliefs and Indigenous spirituality, I am left wondering if the YMCA leadership could have designed a camp that honoured the Stoney Nakoda culture in a respectful way. I cannot see how they could have done so without an abiding relationship with both the people and the land; a relationship that countered the Settler tendency to erase and replace Indigenous people (Tuck & Yang, 2012).

For me, the multivocal nature of the braided strands speaks to the complexity of Settler identity formation as influenced by a colonial project like Camp Chief Hector. The place strand now speaks not only of where the two worlds of child and adult meet, but also of where they meet each other under the shadow of Mount Baldy at Camp Chief Hector. Returning once again, I begin as instructed by the Elders, in ceremony and prayer. It is here, in my re-turn that the account of my first Grand Council, with its almost magical qualities, invokes an emotional story of belonging, as re-membered through the eyes of an innocent self. The colonial project that was Camp Chief Hector, stands in jarring stark contrast. There was nothing innocent about the project, rather the injustices that undergirded the colonial project of camp, seduced my young self into a world of its own making. While there is part of me that longs for a world where such innocence could be protected, I now know there is a story that needs to be told. "To begin a story, someone in some way must break a particular silence" (Wiebe & Johnson, 1998, p. 3).

Place: My Return

Upon my re-turn to camp, I took seriously *how* I conducted myself. Unlike my experience as a child, I had a growing awareness of tipi protocols and I felt it was important to honour protocol, even though I was alone. In my role as Director of Indigenous Initiatives, I received teachings about the connection between the land and protocols. My visit was part of my reconciliation with the land and the land was present to witness me. As I circled the tipi, I was pleased to see that the entrance, signified by the space in the circle of metal bunkbeds, was east facing. I wondered if this was intentional, since east facing tipis were directed towards the rising sun, an important element of Stoney Nakoda culture⁹. Might this have been a remnant from the early days when Stoney Nakoda Nation members helped set up the camp's tipis, welcomed to visit camp solely to provide a service? I entered the tipi in a manner

⁹ From tipi teachings I received from Stoney Nakoda Elder Duane Mark, Fall 2018.

that honoured the teachings I had received. As a lone woman, I stayed to the left, making my way around to the back of the tipi before sitting on the wooden floor facing the firepit. I offered tobacco and lit my smudge in preparation for my time at camp. I prayed to Creator for safety, wisdom, and an open heart and eyes to see lessons I needed to learn. The rushing wind blew the cleansing smoke of the smudge up over my hands, head, and heart. It felt right to start my time following protocols in ceremony as a means of showing respect to the land. It was a first step.

I longed to visit the site of the Grand Councils as an important step towards reconciliation. Grand Council, where I experienced appropriated cultural ceremonies on the last nights of camp as a child, was a secret site kept hidden from campers in order to preserve a sense of honour and importance. Fortunately, the camp director gave me a map with an approximate location because I would have wandered in the woods for hours otherwise. I set off in hopes of spending time at the site. I soon found a path leading up into the woods. Given the recent provincial pandemic restrictions, camp had not run as usual for the past two summers and the paths were overgrown with scattered fallen logs. It felt good to walk the path again; the wooded path I had only walked at night as a child.

As I walked up the overgrown path to what was once the Council site, my eye caught an unusually large tree towered majestically at the edge of the path. I paused to greet her, wondering aloud what stories she held. I took my time, soaking in the experience. As I walked on, I wasn't sure if I had found the right path to the site, but the solar-powered lights dotting the ascending path made me think I had. I suspected solar power lights offered a safer lighting source than the precarious bowls of fire and torches of my youth. That's when I saw them. A streak of grey fur dashed across my field of vision and then another. Two grey wolves crisscrossed down the mountain, loping towards me. I froze. I knew wolves didn't show themselves by accident. They were very aware of their surroundings. Afraid for my safety, I turned abruptly and hiked swiftly down the path, armed with bear spray, yelling, and

swinging my arms wildly. Having lost a colleague and friend in a grizzly bear attack that spring, I did not take this encounter lightly.

Once back at my car, I sat down and closed the door. I recounted the sighting of the wolves in my mind, remembering both the awe and fright I experienced. While I longed to continue my visit, I took the sighting as a warning not to proceed. I visited camp with the intention of meeting with the land, and as I was later reminded by my supervisor, the land visited me. I'm not sure of the reason, but I was not permitted to visit the site of the Grand Council. The place remains a memory of man-made attempts at Indigenous ceremony, of being at one with nature. I didn't feel chastised or that I was wrong to try, but I did feel it was prudent to heed their warning. The wolves visited me, and I long to understand all that their visit means for me.

Entering the Sanctum

The dark rider stopped, and the drumming stilled as if on cue. The riders glowing eyes reflecting the flickering light of his fire torch. He pulled the reigns to lead his horse off the path. My eyes caught sight of a fort-like structure of towering pines, barely visible in the dark night. A drumbeat started again, drawing us forward. A gap in the towering wall revealed logs, laid out in a semi-circle. We were led to our seats on the logs and motioned to sit cross-legged with the blanket on our laps. Children and leaders filed in behind, silent but for the swishing of legs. The night air was heavy with anticipation.

Feeling warmed by the bodies pressed beside me and the blanket on my lap, my mind drifted to memories of the past two weeks – to canoe trips down the South Saskatchewan and overnight hiking trips across Buller Pass. I pictured Mount Baldy towering behind us as our counsellor retold the legend of the sleeping Chief. As the story wound slowly, she stretched her arm to the sky in the southwest and traced with her finger the outline of his body we knew as Mount Yamnuska. I felt as at home in the shadow of these mountains as anywhere. In this valley, I learned to read the clouds and predict the coming weather. I foraged for Indian chewing gum among the early summer foliage and found sweet

wild strawberries hidden under their patterned leaves. I could even tell you where there was an old Sundance circle hidden off the path near Kananaskis River. Tattered and faded strips of cloth clung to the skeleton-like wood, hinting at the sacred ceremonies performed years ago where young warriors returning from a vision quest would pierce their flesh and danced around the centre tree of life as a rite of passage to adulthood. My stomach lurched at the vivid image playing in my mind.

“Meetah Kola nayhoon—po omnicheeyay nee—chopi---”¹⁰ a deep voice pierced the night, bringing me back to the present. “Hear me my friend,” he continued. “We are about to hold a Council.” I noticed a man and woman, painted dark like the horse rider, standing on either side of a prominent wooden chair at the front of the Grand Council sanctum. Again, my attention quickly shifted towards the door. Four torch bearers entered flanking the Chief. His headdress and bead-adorned buckskin jacket stood in contrast to the loinclothed helpers. They remained standing as the Chief took his seat and the ceremony began.

The Hope That Was Camp Chief Hector

It is impossible to understand CCH apart from its relationship to land. In the 1920s, Cecil Brown, General Secretary of the YMCA, and the board of governors, forged a relationship with leaders from the Stoney Nakoda Nation in hopes of developing a permanent residential boy’s camp on their land at the edge of the Rocky Mountains. The leadership sought land close enough to the city to be accessible, but located on Indigenous land (Tierney & YMCA, 1980). As Brown expressed,

Securing of this camp site at Bowfort was more or less of a romance. Situated as it is in the foothills of the Rockies, or as one might say in the truth really in the Rockies, it is located on the property of one of the few remaining reserves allocated exclusively to the Redman. (p. 3)

¹⁰ YMCA. (1980). *Camp Chief Hector 50 Years of Leadership in camping song book*. <http://cchgolidentipi.ca/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/Song-Book.pdf>

Two leaders, Chief Hector Crawler and Walking Buffalo, known as Jonas Benjamin, initially resisted the camp's creation, however, after three years of negotiation, they conceded and signed a 15-year lease stating, they hoped the camp would "make the white men's sons better than the white men had been" (p. 3). The men supported the early development of the camp, even visiting regularly and providing labourers to build fences, haul building materials, and set up tipis (Tierney & YMCA, 1980). Described as noble, monarch-like, and "as near a Christian Gentleman as you can expect any Indian to become," (p. 6) Chief Hector impressed the camp leadership so much, they named the camp after him. It is impossible to know what motivated the two Stoney leaders to shift from resistance to support and then take a daily interest in the camp development because both men were killed in separate accidents within the first year the camp operated. What is apparent is the YMCA camp leadership did not take to heart the indictment woven into the nation's purposeful support. The Stoney Nakoda leadership hoped camp would transform the children and make them better than their fathers (and leaders).

Sense-Making: An Address

Camp Chief Hector, the YMCA camp, bears the name of Chief Hector Crawler. Perhaps the YMCA leaders chose this name to show respect for the Chief's noble character and his investment in helping the YMCA leaders launch the camp (YMCA, 2005). Perhaps it was to acknowledge Chief Hector's commitment to the camp through the lengthy lease negotiations; however, to Alice, the great-granddaughter of Chief Hector Crawler, the name, and the use of his likeness in brochures and posters, was a serious offence and a sign that the camp leaders did not fashion the camp after Stoney Nakoda culture (personal communication, January 25, 2022). The Stoney Nakoda people never name mountains or organizations, such as CCH, after a person as this would violate their cultural value of humility. Instead, names are chosen that celebrate the sacredness of the mountains, lakes, and streams as places of deep spiritual communion with the land (Snow, 2005; J. Snow, personal communication, January 24,

2022). Naming within Indigenous cultures is performed in ceremony. The right to name objects is one given to humans with agency and power, something Settlers have done without considering the cultural appropriateness of their actions. Most recently, the Stoney Nakoda people reclaimed and restored a mountain peak to its traditional Stoney Nakoda name, Anû Kathâ îpa, which means Bald Eagle Peak. In this renaming Chief Clifford Poucette of the Wesley First Nation announced, "Finally, the day has come when justice has been done and this mountain will move forward" (Colgan, 2021). The right to name objects was one given to humans with agency and power, a right often withheld from Indigenous people in Settler society. Naming the camp was not done in ceremony, although situated on land leased from the Stoney Nakoda, rather it was named after Chief Hector Crawler which was not only a sign that the YMCA leadership was ignorant of the Stoney culture, but it was also an exertion of colonial power over the Stoney Nakoda Nation. I wonder how the nation would respond if the YMCA leadership consulted them about renaming the camp. Given the importance of relationship and ceremony in the naming process, I suspect the request would need to be a part of a much more involved process of truth and reconciliation.

When describing the troubled nature of current Indigenous-Canadian relations, Donald (2021) draws attention to the institutional and socio-cultural perpetuation of colonial logics that encourages Canadians to deny relationships with Indigenous peoples and the more-than-human world. My experiences at Grand Council taught me a harmful way of relating, one that erased and replaced Indigenous people. Before European contact, Indigenous communities lived by the principle of kinship relationality, or the responsibility to conduct oneself as a good relative with the human and more-than-human world. However, "the story of ancient kinship relationality was gradually replaced by the emerging story of a Canadian nation and nationality" where Settlers related to land as property and treated Indigenous people as less than human" (p. 56). As a child, I walked the dimly lighted path to Grand Council on stolen land led by a red-painted rider, where I learned harmful ways of knowing, being,

and doing. My act of re-turning requires me to acknowledge the past harms and the ways colonial logics shaped my relationships. I need to follow a new path, led by an Elder from the community who can teach me to walk forward in a better way so that I can become better than my forefathers.

As the weeks passed the image of the wolves did not fade from my memory, and my desire to know the significance of their visit grew within me. I had been addressed, personally by the wolves. Something had happened; something powerful – I was reminded of Gadamer’s words, that “understanding begins when something addresses us” (Gadamer, 1960/1989, p. 299), but as Jardine (2012) pointed out, “it only begins there” (p. 4). The haunting words, “Meetah Kola nayhoon—po omnicheeyay nee—chopi” were once again calling to me, but this time calling me to visit the Elders of the community. The hope that Chief Hector Crawler and Walking Buffalo held to “make the white men’s sons better than the white men had been” (p. 3), now needed to be heeded. The wolves’ presence unsettled me, interrupting my journey. I was re-visiting the Grand Council site with expectation and purpose, yet the wolves stopped me in my path and thwarted my endeavour. Moules et al. (2014) liken the experience of being addressed to the “feeling of being caught in some aspect of the world” (p. 1), causing one to pause and listen, to remain vulnerable and open. Certainly, the wolves’ presence caused me to feel worried about my physical safety for the moments I was alone on the path, but their presence stayed with me, haunting me long after the encounter. I felt incapable of answering the questions their presence raised. Why were they there? What was the significance of their visit? And how might the answer to these questions help me understand my Settler identity and relationship to Indigenous people and the land? I could not be sure, but I trusted the presence of an address meant I was listening and searching (Moules et al., 2014).

Questioning indicates the existence of an unsettled issue, a difficult matter, an uncertainty, a matter for discussion. It also invites a reply, a dialogue, a searching out of opportunities and

similarities. It opens possibilities and leads, in some sense, to uncertainty, for it throws what may have been thought secure into dis-equilibrium or imbalance. (Bergum, 1999, p. 57)

Though I had a preliminary understanding of how to relate to the land through ceremony and prayer, the wolves' presence revealed my need for further teaching and guidance from an Elder in the community.

Something about the Grand Council site and all I had experienced there as a child called me to return. I longed to return to the site and make amends. The Oxford University Press (n.d.) defines the word return as the act of going back to a place, person, or condition or to turn back again. However, I felt the gravity of what occurred at that site required a deeper returning, a turning back again of my body, mind, and spirit. To repent is a type of return. The word repent is from the Greek word metanoóō, meaning to change one's mind or purpose and speaks of a spiritual conversion (Oxford University Press, n.d.). Often used in religious contexts, the expected result of true repentance, or changing one's mind and purpose, is a changed life. In many ways, I felt compelled to return to the site, renew my thinking, and walk a better path forward. In his conceptualization of a better way forward, Donald (2021) describes going on a "walk in search of kinship relationality," where a new story emerges that no longer "perpetuates the damaging and divisive colonial legacies that result from relational denial" but where "networks of human and more than human relations that enmesh us become vivified and apparent" (p. 53). Though I longed to walk a better path forward, one that brought life and renewal, the wolves stopped that journey, and I knew I had to discover why.

Place: Meeting Chief Hector's Great Granddaughter

Answering the address, I was compelled to learn more about Stoney Nakoda culture from people who were from the community and had connection to its land-based teachings. I wondered if they might help uncover why the wolves revealed themselves. Provincial COVID-19 restrictions precluded spending time with community members on the land, however, an online book club led by the two sons of the late Chief John Snow focused on his book *These Mountains are Our Sacred Places:*

The Story of the Stoney People, felt right— a path forward towards answers. During one session, I shared my doctoral research with John Snow Jr. and expressed my desire to understand my White Settler identity and relationship to land. As though Chief Hector and Walking Buffalo's words from the past echoed in the present, John welcomed further discussion, seeing an opportunity to help me, a child of White Settlers, of CCH, become better than my forefathers. He confirmed that my wolf sighting was indeed significant and required interpretation from an Elder in the community, noting that some might consider the encounter to be a vision while others would view it as an encounter with wolves. He encouraged me to remain open and to seek an interpretation from an Elder.

I contacted Alice Kaquitts, an Elder from the Stoney Nakoda Nation with whom I had an existing relationship. Years earlier, I stood with Alice at the steps of the TRC Museum in Winnipeg, witnessing her visceral reaction to the tall brick building that reminded her of a residential school. Gaining strength from her spiritual practices, she smudged, prayed, and walked up the stairs, resilient in response to the trauma inflicted by Settler colonial violences. I witnessed how events from the past reverberated into the present and how place-based teachings, passed down through generations, brought healing in the moment. Having a deep respect for Alice's spirituality, I contacted her, requesting help to interpret my encounter with the wolves. Once again, ceremony and prayer proved significant. She told me that my email arrived just as she finished time in ceremony and prayer, a sign of its importance. As a spiritual person and great granddaughter of Chief Hector Crawler, she saw meaning in my encounter with the more-than-human world. After accepting tobacco, Alice opened our time in prayer and teaching, sharing about her nation's historical relationship with the YMCA and Camp Chief Hector. Themes of exclusion and exploitation wove through her story as she recounted the historical and present impact of camp on her people. At her prompting, I told her about my childhood experience at camp and how it shaped my White Settler identity and relationship with Indigenous people, land, and the more-than-human world. I shared about my visit to camp, about my desire to heal my relationship to the land at camp, and my

encounter with the wolves. She smiled when I told her I wasn't sure if I had seen wolves or just a vision, but that I knew it was significant either way.

Though I came to her with questions, Alice saw beyond my immediate query to my deeper need. She could see the burden of shame I carried for my participation at camp, and she wanted me to find a childlike freedom once again, to become fully human. As Gadamer noted, the human task is "to find free spaces and learn to move therein" (1986, p. 59). Alice's words felt like a cleansing balm, washing over me, and addressing the deep shame I carried because of my childhood experiences at camp. Alice told me that the wolves visited me, stopping me for a reason, but that I would return to that spot once again when I was ready. She reminded me that I was a child when I attended camp and that as a child, I was not responsible for the harms done. However, she agreed that as an adult, I had a responsibility to seek reconciliation. She spoke about the importance of humility, particularly when participating in acts of reconciliation. Again, she spoke of my return to camp, seeking protection and guidance from the more-than-human world when I returned to the site of the ceremonies. She told me I was to play a role in helping to heal the relationship between camp and the Stoney Nakoda Nation. The wolves revealed themselves to me, and that was a significant sign that I was on the right path¹¹.

Coming to Belong

Moncosa, a brave and servant to the Chief, asked for fire. "Now light we the Council fire," he called out, "after the manner of the forest children. We ask the fire dancer to bring the sacred flame which Waconda himself hath sent."

¹¹ I was given permission from Elder Alice Kaquitts and Rev. John Snow to share the story of my encounter with the Wolves. Having received the vision of the Wolves, I followed cultural protocols under the guidance of Elder Alice and Rev. John Snow and will continue to do so in the future, though I have chosen not to write about this process in detail.

At once, a young woman, painted dark and adorned with a loincloth dress, danced sprite-like towards the firepit, swinging two lighted pots skillfully. She circled and twisted, synchronized with the haunting drumbeat until fire magically flowed from her hands to light the Council fire. An audible gasp was heard throughout the crowd as a voice called out.

Now know we that Waconda, whose dwelling is above the Thunder Bird, whose messenger is the Thunder Bird, hath been pleased to smile on his children, hath sent down the sacred fire. By this we know he will be present at our Council and that his wisdom will be with us.¹²

Once again, the man called Moncosa moved forward to become visible by the light of the fire. He held up a pipe to the crowd saying, "this is a council of peace so light we first the pipe of peace." Lighting it, he drew in a couple of puffs to ensure it was properly lit before offering it to the Chief. Small circles of smoke rose from the pipe as the Chief took a couple of puffs before passing the pipe back. Moncosa grasped the peace pipe with the stem pointed to the sky and recited, "to WACONDA, that his wisdom be with us NAY-OSH-NI-WAY-YAY --- NOONWAY."

"NOONWAY," the counsellors and older campers surrounding me replied.

Moncosa, pointing to the earth, cried out. "To MAKANA, Mother Earth, that she send us food ---- NAY-OSH-NI-WAY-YAY --- NOONWAY."

"NOONWAY," more voices joined in the reply.

Facing North, Moncosa lifted the pipe and cried, "To WASI-YATI, the winter wind, may he come not upon us with his cold--- NAY-OSH-NI-WAY-YAY --- NOONWAY."

"NOONWAY." I joined in, finding my voice despite the emotion that caught in my throat.

YMCA. (1980). *Camp Chief Hector 50 Years of Leadership in camping song book*. <http://cchgolidentipi.ca/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/Song-Book.pdf>

“To WAYO-HINYAN-PATA, the Sunrise wind to the East, that he trouble us not with his rain. NAY-OSH-NI-WAY-YAY --- NOONWAY.”

“NOON-WAY.”

“To OKEGA, the hot wind from the South, that he strike us not with his fierce heat- NAY-OSH-NI-WAY-YAY --- NOONWAY.”

“NOON-WAY,” I echoed, mesmerized by the chorused voices surrounding me.

Finally, Moncosa pointed the pipe to the West. “To WAYO-PEATS, the sunset wind, that he come not upon us with his strength- NAY-OSH-NI-WAY-YAY --- NOONWAY.”

“NOON-WAY,” we replied for the last time.

A quiet reverent hush fell upon the crowd of campers as the counsellors rose at the word of the Chief. First time campers were called to stand and have their blankets placed on their shoulders by their counsellors. Like the leaders and older campers in the past, we were invited into the tribe in this sacred moment. I took my seat with my fellow campers, now warmed by the blankets and our sense of belonging.

The air seemed lighter and the mood jovial as two cloaked figures danced to opposite sides of centre stage, each hopping onto a precarious old wooden crate. Hunched over with blankets covering their shoulders, the two flapped their make-shift wings and squawked a tentative “kiki” call to the other. As though performing an ancient mating dance, the larger male bird-like figure began to flap his wings and called to the smaller bird in a suggestive tone, “kiki.” Children squealed with delight as the male bird’s purposeful, dance-like movements towards the smaller bird resulted in a gyrating cacophony of squawks and flapping arms as the two bird dancers chased each other around the fire circle, spinning and calling “kiki.” Gradually the female bird became less reticent to the male’s advances as she welcomed his embrace, and they ran out of the Grand Council and into the darkness.

My eyes were drawn to the Chief as he rose from his seat prominent at the front of the Council, his tall frame blocking the fire's light. In a booming voice, he declared the Council to be a great success.

"WACONDA-D-DO-WAPI-DENI-TONI, Father, a needy one stands before you, that needy one am I."

With one voice the counsellors and older campers responded, "WACONDA-D-DO-WAPI-DENI-TONI, Father, a needy one stands before you, that needy one am I."

"The sun has set behind the mountains," he continued. "Our council is over. Dwell on what you have learned. Remember your friends. Go in peace and happiness."

As I rose in unison with my fellow campers, my heart filled with emotions so new to me I could barely hold back the tears. We walked back to our tipis along the dark path in hushed silence, my mind swirled with emotion and memory. My first native ceremony, an Induction Ceremony, meant I belonged.

Stolen Lands

It is deeply troubling to read the early writings by Cecil Brown about the creation of camp where he notes the historical encroachment of Whiteman on Indigenous land and the "indelible mark of bitterness on the mind of the Indian" (Tierney & YMCA, 1980, p. 5). Brown recognized the Stoney Nakoda Nation was portioned a small remnant of land through treaty negotiation which resulted in mistrust and suspicion in their future dealings with White men, such as the YMCA leadership. However, he did not pause to consider the Stoney's perspective or their recent losses and the impact on the nation.

In his book, *These Mountains are Our Sacred Places: The Story of the Stoney People*, Chief John Snow (2005) recounted the compounding losses experienced by his people as a result of being moved onto the Morleyville reserve and restricted from their traditional hunting grounds after signing Treaty 7.

We had been promised the continuation of our traditional life of hunting, trapping, fishing, and gathering berries, plants, and herbs in our traditional hunting grounds. We had no idea we would be forced to settle on a small piece of land and become agriculturalists. (p. 46)

Due to deeply problematic misunderstandings inherent in the Treaty 7 signing process, the three Stoney Nakoda Nations (Chiniki, Bearspaw, and Wesley First Nations) were treated as a single nation and portioned only one reserve. In the early years following the signing of Treaty 7, the Stoney Nakoda people were permitted to maintain their traditional practice of hunting game while attempting to shift to an agrarian-based economy. Despite crop failure due to poor soil and growing conditions, the Stoney hunters delayed their community's dependence on government rations by hunting big game. In 1883, the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR) extended through Stoney Nakoda territory, bringing an influx of Settler farmers and ranchers who claimed land and restricted access to the Stoney Nakoda hunters. By 1888, the number of large game diminished to the point Stoney Nakoda hunters could no longer obtain sufficient food for their families. Concurrently, the Canadian Government further restricted Stoney Nakoda hunters from accessing their traditional hunting grounds through the creation of the Rocky Mountain Park (Banff National Park); a park created to protect the interests of game conservation, sport hunting, and tourism while forbidding the Stoney Nakoda from entering their traditional hunting grounds (Binnema & Niemi, 2006; Snow, 2005). In addition, in response to Louis Riel's rebellion in Manitoba, the government feared the Treaty 7 signatory nations (Blackfoot, Tsuut'ina, and Stoney Nakoda) would unite and rebel against their current conditions, so they implemented a pass system that further restricted the nation members movement off their land (Snow, 2005).

The Stoney Nakoda Nations' connection to land extended beyond access to traditional hunting grounds and food sources. Chief John Snow (2005) argued the Rocky Mountains were sacred ceremonial and religious sites, "our temples, our sanctuaries, and our resting places. They are a place

of hope, a place of vision, a place of refuge, and a very special place where the Great Spirit speaks to us” (p. 19). Limiting the Stoney Nakoda community to the land at Morleyville played into the missionaries’ and government’s agenda to Christianize, civilize, and assimilate the people. As lands were stolen, the Stoney Nakoda became increasingly disconnected from the land from which their culture, knowledges, and language were rooted. This is the context in which the YMCA leaders approached the Stoney Leadership, asking for land on which to build their Christian summer camp for White Settler boys.

It’s difficult to comprehend that Stoney children were forced to attend the McDougall Indian Day School (1873-1922) and the Morley Indian Residential School System (1922-1969) run by the church during the same era CCH was being developed (United Church of Canada, 2021). While the YMCA was negotiating a lease agreement to allow their boys to experience the romance of an appropriated version of Indian culture, Stoney children were forced to attend a school where they could not speak their language or practice their culture. Angela Siev (nee Starkey; 2016), who was a child in the 1940-50s, grew up across the highway from the Stoney Nakoda Nation at Diamond Cross Ranch, and recalled reports of children climbing out windows to run away from abuses suffered at the school. It is difficult for me to comprehend why the Stoney Nakoda leadership granted permission to the YMCA to build the camp during this time of such hardship for their own children. Interestingly, the Nation ended the YMCA’s lease in 1970, just one year after the IRS closed, in order to use the land for new programs for their nation (Tierney & YMCA, 1980). I can’t help but wonder if these two events are related. I also wonder if the Stoney Nakoda leadership would consider the Settler children better than their fathers had been because of their camping experience.

When the Stoney Nakoda leadership made the decision to end the leasing agreement for the Bowfort Site, the YMCA was forced to find a new site for their camp. The YMCA leadership soon learned that the Diamond Cross Guest Ranch, a 1000-acre property across the highway from the

current site, was up for lease (YMCA, 2005). With the ready support of the Alberta Provincial Government, the YMCA secured a 25-year lease and monies to develop the site. Camp officials grieved the loss of the original site on Stoney land, but they quickly shifted their attention to the new camp, which expanded to include girls. By 1974, the new camp was up and running with its Seton-inspired Grand Council site and program. Memory of the relationship with the Stoney Nakoda and their land soon faded.

Sense-Making: Erasure

In my re-turn to the experiences of camp that formed me, I needed to confront the young female dancer adorned with a loincloth dress, dancing sprite-like towards the firepit, circling and twisting to the haunting drumbeat. I once sat, transfixed by her seductive, dark magic, as fire mysteriously flowed from her hands to light the Council fire. As a child, I did not see how her provocative dress and movements were an appropriated and distorted display of Indigenous culture that held traces of the “enduring colonial racist and sexist stereotype of dirty, promiscuous and deviant indigenous femininity” (Bourgeois, 2015, p. 41). A stereotype, argues Cree scholar Robyn Bourgeois (2015), that casts Indigenous females as more sexually available in the eyes of society and therefore more violable. During the Council, the motif of the hypersexualized Indigenous female extended to the suggestive mating dance of the ‘kiki birds’ where the male bird relentlessly pursued the female bird until she acquiesced. Stereotypes of the sexually available and willing Indigenous female have perpetuated sexual violence and abuse against Indigenous women and girls (Bourgeois, 2015). Such treatment, a direct by-product of colonialism, racism, and patriarchy, works to erase Indigenous women by increasing their vulnerability to exploitation and abuse; a genocidal erasure seen in the contemporary social phenomenon of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls (MMIWG) in Canada (Bourgeois, 2018). As children, we were unaware of how such suggestive imagery acted as a colonial text, teaching us how to view and categorize Indigenous women and normalize and ignore their mistreatment in the ongoing horrors of MMIWG.

The metaphor of erasure extends to the treatment of Indigenous children as experienced at the Indian Residential School (IRS) in Morley, a system of forced assimilation meant to 'kill the Indian in the child' (Pratt, 1892; cited in Prucha, 1973 p. 260; United Church of Canada, 2021). While the IRS system promoted the colonial agenda to Christianize and civilize the nation, Bourgeois (2015) argues Indigenous women and children in Canada were at increased risk for sexual exploitation due to the intersecting variables linked to Settler colonial violences such as the IRS. Children from the Stoney Nakoda Nation were forced to attend the church-run Morleyville Residential School where they endured a spectrum of horrific abuses (United Church of Canada, 2021). It is difficult to imagine that the YMCA leaders did not know about the abuses, when even young Angela Siev, the daughter of a local rancher, heard reports of children escaping through windows of schools (Siev, 2016). She concluded their desperate behaviour was a result of mistreatment. During the years I attended camp, the agenda of erasure continued. While I engaged in fake, appropriated ceremony at Grand Council, the nation was living through the Sixties Scoop, a time from the 1960s to mid-1980s, when government policies and laws attempted to erase Indigenous children from the geographical, political, social, and cultural landscape by removing them from their birth families and placing them in non-Indigenous homes, devoid of connection to their language, culture, and family (Sinclair, 2007).

Moncosa, just visible by the light of the fire, offered up a facsimile version of the peace pipe to the four directions. However, as it was all a sanitized colonially appropriated version of an Indigenous ceremony, there was no resulting peace. As with many aspects of the White man's agenda for the Stoney Nakoda, a fake ceremony resulted in counterfeit peace. Much as Seton longed to reverse the damage of modern society on White Settler children, the YMCA leadership sought peace and restoration through a counterfeit Indigenous program (Shore, 2020). The YMCA leadership was driven by a thinly veiled colonial agenda to acquire Stoney Nakoda land. Tuck and Yang (2012) warn that a Settler sense of peace is predicated on the erasure of Indigenous people and the recasting of land as property. The YMCA

leadership was not seeking peace, but instead access to the land for the benefit of their children and themselves.

The blanket, placed on my shoulders in the presence of the counsellors and campers, imparted a sense of acceptance and belonging to me. Appropriated from the Indigenous cultural practice, the camp leaders placed blankets on the children's shoulders to welcome them into the camp family. Much as the blankets played a questionable role in the Grand Council, the storied history of the blanket in Settler-Indigenous relations is one of pain and belonging. Long before European contact, the Stoney Nakoda fashioned buffalo and large animal hides, mnoga ha rhpâyâb, as blankets for protection and ceremonial purposes (Snow, 2005). However, as Europeans encroached on Stoney Nakoda land, large game herds decreased significantly and the community's access to the life-giving buffalo ceased. The community shifted to a greater reliance on the Indian agent and government for food and supplies, and the European-made Indian blanket became a necessity, fraught with fear. Stories spread of European Settler giving gifts of smallpox infested blankets (Dempsey, 2004). As diseases decimated Indigenous communities such stories bred mistrust and fear. The Indian agents were also known to withhold blankets and clothing, causing unnecessary suffering (Daschuk, 2019). The blankets continue to represent an important element of many Indigenous cultures and given as gifts in an act of reciprocity. In my work at the university, I often give blankets as gifts to honour and recognize the contributions of Indigenous partners, as this practice aligns with local cultural protocols. However, as with many items of importance to Indigenous peoples, there exists a colonial legacy of harm that must be acknowledged and redressed. The blanket, placed on my shoulders, gave me a false sense of belonging at the expense of the Stoney Nakoda. As I move forward in a good way, I must ensure that my actions benefit the nation and do not violate their protocols.

Towards Reconciliation

Once again, the advertisement for the cancelled 90th-anniversary reunion flashed across my computer screen, reminding me of how it addressed me, inviting me to reflect on my participation in CCH's conflicted history. Over the past 90 years, thousands of children attended camp and were shaped by its colonial agenda. Like me, they likely held many positive memories of outdoor adventures, enjoying the beauty of the mountains as children. However, with the growing awareness within Settler society of the atrocities committed at residential schools, many Canadians are beginning to rethink their childhood experiences and trouble the narratives about Indigenous people told to them, stories that shaped them and taught them not to see the truth about Indigenous-Settler relations and the harms of colonialism. The story of CCH is a story about one camp, but it also offers a window into Canadian culture and Settler-Indigenous relations reverberating on a broader scale. By thinking through my camp experiences in light of the broader socio-historical context, I uncovered how CCH represents a deeper colonial problem. The story of CCH demonstrates how the Settler colonial thirst for land and cultural dominance, contributes to devastating harm for Indigenous people. Settler Canadians have forgotten how to be in relationship with each other, and kinship connectivity to the human and more-than-human world.

I am reminded of my encounter with the wolves and how their presence alerted me to the potential dangers of this work and the importance of not proceeding alone. As a Settler, formed within this Settler colonial system, I must look to the Elders and community members for guidance and teaching. I am beholden to the protocols and teachings of the land. My encounter with the wolves, as understood through Elder Alice's spiritual guidance, is a sign that I am on a good path and that I must continue with humility and purpose. I have been invited to important, relational work requiring my own further transformation and growth. She encouraged me to maintain an open spirit by listening to the stories from her people, reflecting on my own life experiences, and spending time on the land.

In the following chapter, I engage my hermeneutic imagination and consider the insights gained from reading and rereading the braided text. As David G. Smith suggests:

The hermeneutic imagination works from a commitment to generativity and rejuvenation and to the question of how we can go on together in the midst of constraints and difficulties that constantly threaten to foreclose on the future. The aim of interpretation, it could be said, is not just another interpretation but human freedom, which finds its light, identity and dignity in those few brief moments when one's lived burdens can be shown to have their source in too limited a view of things. (1999, p.29)

I look to the textual braid for insights on how to proceed; for a better way forward, as Donald (2009) suggests countering colonial logics with teachings about responsibility and acts of kindness as a “movement towards connectivity and relationality” (p. 19). I look to its teachings for ways to renew my relationship with Indigenous people and the land.

Chapter 5

Towards Reconciliation

As I sit down to write to understand the ways the textual braid reveals my childhood experiences at Camp Chief Hector (CCH) and the ways they shaped my White Settler identity, I am struck by how the stories, woven together, speak to both the specific history of Camp Chief Hector and to the broader issues shaping the relationship between Indigenous people and Canadians. The layered texts, purposefully brought together as one, disclose insights and deep understanding that remains inaccessible when left unbraided. It reveals the ways non-Indigenous Canadians maintain a version of history that upholds White Settler-colonial dominance and maintains Indigenous peoples' invisibility from Canadian consciousness (Regan, 2010). Donald (2012) offers Indigenous Métissage as a way of orientating Indigenous peoples and Canadians towards each other, to "facilitate the emergence of a new story that can repair inherited colonial divides and give good guidance on how Indigenous peoples and Canadians can live together differently" (p. 53). Regan (2010) argues "we must work to 're-story' the dominant-cultural version of history; that is, we must make decolonizing space for Indigenous history – counter-narratives of diplomacy, law, and peacemaking practices – as told by Indigenous peoples themselves" (p. 6).

With the truth about CCH laid bare, I wonder what steps Settler Canadians can take to move toward reconciliation with Indigenous peoples. In many ways, my experiences at camp taught me harmful ways of relating with Indigenous people and the land through a colonial curriculum— now, I am left wondering how things could be different. Reconciliation is a contested term often promoted as a path forward. Etymologically, the word "reconciliation" comes from the Anglo-Norman and Middle French word, *réconcilier*, or "to restore oneself to friendly relations with oneself or another, to peace and unity" (Oxford University Press, n.d.). Though I seek to restore friendly (or more accurately *right*) relations with Indigenous people and the land, I fear this understanding of the term does not go far

enough. As Brooke Madden (2019), a scholar of Haudenosaunee and Mi'kmaq ancestry, argues, an assertion for a righted relationship from a Eurocentric paradigm is not sufficient and will continue to replicate colonial harm. Moreover, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, after hearing thousands of hours of testimony from survivors of abuse at Indian Residential Schools, put forward a definition that extends past a restoration of a previously friendly relationship¹³, saying:

Reconciliation is about establishing and maintaining a mutually respectful relationship between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples in this country. For that to happen, there has to be awareness of the past, acknowledgement of the harm that has been inflicted, atonement for the causes, and action to change behaviour. (2015a, pp. 1-2)

To realize this needed shift in relationship, I believe Canadians must embrace transformative reconciliation that “fundamentally problematizes the settler state” and embraces a “rollback of settler state control over Indigenous individuals and communities, commensurate with the restoration of Indigenous lands, cultures, laws, languages, and governance traditions” as upheld in the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* (UNDRIP) (MacDonald, 2020, p. 8; UNDRIP, 2008).

While I support movement towards transformative reconciliation, many of which are at the community and societal level, I also look to Indigenous teachings to “give good guidance on how Indigenous peoples and Canadians can live together differently” (Donald, 2012, p. 53); ways of relating that can transform White Settler relationship to Indigenous people, and the land. In this chapter, I consider insights gained from the braided texts, of the key moments that speak to me about the topic of White Settler identity. I consider ideas that presented themselves in the strands of the braid, the process of braiding, and the braid itself present in the previous chapter; ideas that give direction and give rise to forms of reconciliation. To do this, I orient towards Indigenous principles to help me

¹³ Many Indigenous people argue there was never a right relationship to return to.

understand how to relate to Indigenous people and land in more ethical and life-giving ways. I consider how the principles of respect, reverence, reciprocity, responsibility, and kinship relationality act as a hopeful counter-narrative to imagine a better way forward, to be a better relative with kinship responsibilities (Archibald, 2008; Donald, 2012; 2021; Justice, 2018).

Respect and Reverence

As I attend to the braided text, I find it speaks to me of the principles of respect and reverence, through its enactments and violations. I ground my understanding of respect and reverence in teachings from the Treaty 7 territory. In reference to the Traditional Stoney-Assiniboine Seven Sacred Teachings, Tony Snow speaks of *Ahogichipabi*, or respect as the practice of living honourably with one another and creation, to never take more than one needs, and to give willingly in accordance with the plan of Creator (Urban Indigenous Circle, 2021). Respect is the gift from the Buffalo; through giving its life and sharing every part of itself for the people, it is a living example of respect. The principle of respect for all people and the rhythms of Mother Earth grew from a deep reverence for all of creation and from a very practical need to live in harmony with nature and survive in community (Friesen & Snow, 2014). To respect the protocols and the teachings is to be in right relationship, as Carolla Calf Robe, a Blackfoot Elder, says,

You cannot know the land without knowing the plants placed here by the Creator. You cannot know the Creator without knowing the plants. You cannot know the plants and their healing powers without hearing the stories from our ancestors. It is one and the same. (p. 180, as cited in Friesen et al., 2010)

One With the Land

As a child at camp, I was swept up into the wonder and awe of the Grand Council experience. I partook in fake, appropriations of pan-Indigenous ceremony, but my child-self felt a sense of deep reverence for the mysterious ceremonies and solemn traditions. The word reverence from the French

word, *revereri*, means "to stand in awe of, respect, honor, and fear," (Oxford University Press, n.d.). The Grand Council with the patterned program and rituals, led me to believe the ceremonies were sacred and worthy of reverence. Though the rituals were not real, something within me longed to feel connected with a greater purpose, to find meaning. As with many in the national camping movement in the 1920s, CCH leadership designed a camping program that fostered a sense of belonging, community, and spiritual experience by modelling antimodern images of Indigenous life and spirituality (Wall, 2005). At summer camp, we were taken into nature to *play Indian* through appropriated ceremonies to address unmet needs created by modern society's disconnection from nature and spirituality (Deloria, 1998; Wall, 2005). As Elder Alice Kaquitts noted, my sense of connection to land as a child was normal and natural because children are open to learn from the land, however, as an adult I am aware that the ways I connected were disrespectful and in violation of Stoney Nakoda culture and the protocols of the land (personal communication, January 25, 2022). While it grieves me to think of the ways I participated in harm, I feel hopeful that I can learn to be a better relative.

In his book, *These Mountains Are Our Sacred Places*, Chief John Snow (2005) describes the Stoney people as deeply spiritual, continually searching for truth by observing the universe around them and finding ways to live in harmony with nature and in accordance with the creation of the Great Spirit. He recalls:

We talked to the rocks, the streams, the trees, the plants, the herbs, and all nature's creations. We called the animals our brothers. They understood our language; we too, understood theirs. Sometimes they talked to us in dreams and visions. At times they revealed important events or visited us on our vision quests to the mountaintops. Truly we were part of and related to the universe, and these animals were a very special part of the Great Spirit's creation. (p. 4)

The Stoney Nakoda people's relationship to the land is spiritual. It is as Elder Corolla Calf Robe teaches, the Creator, the plants, the land, the stories, the people, and the knowledge, they are one and the same

(Friesen et al., 2010). The Stoney people hold a relational understanding with the land, seeking wisdom and divine guidance through observing sacred ceremonies and rituals. Under the guidance of Elders and medicine men, chosen people erected sacred lodges, praying vigilantly as the lodge was framed with willow branches and covered with animal hides. Unlike the counterfeit ceremony I experienced at CCH, the community followed protocols when preparing the lodge for the ceremony, lighting the sacred fire, and burning the sweet grass, cedar branches, and incense. In accordance with rituals passed down from the ancestors, the spiritual leaders offered the sacred peace pipe to the Sun, Mother Earth, and the four directions with deep reverence—the reverence, ritual, and protocols that were nonexistent as I watched Moncosa perform an appropriated version of such a spiritual ritual. The Stoney Nakoda people believe everything in creation was created by the Great Spirit for a purpose, worthy of respect, and available to teach how “to live a good life and walk the straight path” (Snow, 2005, p. 18). The people intimately knew the surrounding land saying:

These mountains are our temples, our sanctuaries, and our resting places. They are a place of hope and a place of vision, a place of refuge, a very special and holy place where the Great Spirit speaks with us. *Therefore, these mountains are our sacred places* [italics in the original]. (p. 19)

The Stoney Nakoda people follow ancient traditions, grounded in place and rich with meaning, enacting the principles of respect and reverence.

Disruption

The Stoney Nakoda people’s abiding relationship with the land conflicted with the newly formed Canadian government’s desire to remove the people of the nation from the land to make homesteads for incoming European Settlers (Snow, 2005). Seeing the connection between culture and land, the government sought to disrupt this relationship by partnering with the Church to pressure the people to assimilate to European culture and religion. One of the first missionaries to visit the Stoney Nakoda people arrived in 1840 (Snow, 2005). This was 37 years prior to the signing of Treaty 7 that occurred on

September 22, 1877. A permanent mission was set up in 1870 by the McDougall family in the townsite of Morley for the purpose of Christianizing and civilizing the Stoney Nakoda people. The missionaries thought they were bringing Christianity to a “wild and dark continent of savages who roamed aimlessly, without God, without a written law or language, and without money” (p. 27). However, as Chief Snow noted:

The law of the Creator was written on our hearts. We lived and observed a religious life in the freedom of the winds. We were well versed in the law and order of another age, in another language, and in the ways of an unspoiled world. We followed the law of the human heart. Because we studied nature, we respected it, and lived in harmony with it. We did not try to remake or destroy our environment. We did not have any money; therefore, money was not our God. Instead the Great Spirit was and is our God. (p. 27-28)

Rather than bringing God to a godless people, the missionaries enabled the Federal government’s agenda to colonize the Stoney Nakoda people in the name of Christianity and move them off their land so that Settlers could take their land. It is well documented that the signatories from the Treaty 7 First Nations were unaware that in signing the Treaty they were agreeing to land surrender (Snow, 2005). The missionaries failed to respect the Stoney Nakoda people’s faith and their connection to land, a faith tradition that aligned well with Christianity (Snow, 2005). Instead, they brought a Western conceptualized understanding of faith that justified the forced removal of the Stoney Nakoda people from the land and assimilation through dysfunctional systems like the Indian Residential School system and the Indian Act. The early missionaries and their colonial agenda exemplify the harm that is done when Settlers follow colonial agendas instead of respecting the beliefs of Indigenous people and their connection to the land.

On a national level, the government implemented the Indian Act in 1876, a consolidation of paternalistic policies to forcibly assimilate Indigenous people into the dominant Canadian culture

(Joseph, 2018). The government wanted to rid themselves of what they deemed the *Indian problem* rather than respecting Indigenous peoples' sovereignty and their right to self-government, land, and culture. As Sir John A. MacDonald, the first prime minister of Canada, noted, "The great aim of our legislation has been to do away with the tribal system and assimilate the Indian people in all respects with the other inhabitants of the Dominion as speedily as they are fit to change" (MacDonald, 1885, as cited in Francis et al., 2008, p. 44). From its inception to 1951, the Indian Act subjected generations of Indigenous people to laws severely restricting their right to practice their spirituality, declaring cultural ceremonies illegal, and restricting them from leaving their reserve communities without permission from a government appointed Indian Agent (Joseph, 2018). The government's policy was rooted in White supremacy, viewing Indigenous people as an obstacle to Settler progress and a burden to be eliminated (Snow, 2005). Due to severe power imbalances Canadians "assert[ed] their own forms of sovereignty over Indigenous lands and unilaterally enact[ed] legislations designed to eliminate Indigenousness" resulting in damaging effects on Indigenous peoples and their communities" (Donald, 2012, p. 547).

When I consider the assimilatory pressures on Indigenous people from the early missionaries and the government, I am even more troubled by the disrespectful, harmful actions of groups like the YMCA. To act in a respectful manner, particularly when implementing a program or research project, requires time and energy to learn about the priorities of the community and what they would find to be beneficial. Rather than making assumptions about what the community wants, it is crucial to build a trusting relationship where such priorities and perspectives are shared. The YMCA leadership spent three years meeting with the Stoney Nakoda Council, applying pressure on them to secure the lease to the land for their camp. Cecil Brown, the General Secretary of the Calgary YMCA who headed up the delegation that signed the lease agreement made a speech shortly after signing the lease with the Stoney Nakoda leaders in which he acknowledges that what the YMCA were asking was for the Stoney

Nakoda community to surrender a portion of the small amount of land they had left after the Treaty signing. Brown stated, "...the Indian looks suspiciously and with askance at any proposition that the White Man may put forward regarding the securing of a portion of the small remnant of land that now remains to them" (Gardner, n.d.). During the lengthy negotiations, when Walking Buffalo and Chief Hector were hesitant to permit the camp, the leaders did not stop to ask why or what benefit the camp would have for the nation (YMCA, 2005). They failed to consider the Stoney Nakoda people's relationship to land, community, and cultural protocols, or the ways the Stoney Nakoda people had been treated unfairly by the government misinterpretation of Treaty (YMCA, 2005; Snow, 2006).

The YMCA leadership developed a camping program on Stoney Nakoda land to mimic Indigenous culture at a time when it was illegal for the Stoney Nakoda people to engage in their sacred ceremonies and travel to sacred sites (YMCA, 2005; Snow, 2005). Under the guise of a benevolent summer camp, the YMCA leadership embodied this colonial story and taught generations of children to erase and replace Indigenous people, failing to see how their actions contributed to harm. As Donald (2012) noted, "at the heart of the lovely story of the Canadian nation and nationality is a deep denial of the physical, epistemic, and ontological violences committed against Indigenous peoples and their ways" (p. 547). I am left wondering how that relationship could have been different. Had the YMCA leadership approached the Stoney Nakoda Council in a respectful manner, could they have partnered together to develop a camp that provided mutual benefit? I wonder how Indigenous practices might guide a more ethical way of relating, one that makes visible Indigenous ways of knowing, being, and doing.

Towards Ethical Engagement

Though Indigenous people are no longer prohibited from practicing their culture, in her book, *Decolonizing Education: Nourishing the Learning Spirit*, Mi'kmaq scholar Marie Battiste (2013) argues that educational institutions and systems in Canada maintain a Eurocentric cultural and cognitive imperialism that subjugates Indigenous ways of knowing, being, and doing. Through harmful discourses,

Indigenous people and their cultures are problematized rather than the “Eurocentric systems that hides its power and privilege in whiteness, and ignores complicities with dominance, difference, and disadvantage” (p. 33). Such systems remain hidden because the problematic assimilation policies and mentality of benevolent paternalism in Canada are not understood by the Canadian public (Regan, 2010). Battiste suggests non-Indigenous Canadians cannot simply adopt an Indigenous perspective and worldview due to their ontological, epistemological, and axiological differences, a divide many Canadians fail to recognize.

As I consider a way forward, I find myself looking for a framework to help guide ethical, respectful engagement between Indigenous people and non-Indigenous Canadians, one that respects the rights of Indigenous people to practice their culture and honours difference. I am drawn to Cree scholar Willie Ermine’s (2007) conceptualization of ethical space as a helpful way for Indigenous people and non-Indigenous Canadians with differing worldviews to interact and engage, where both “coexist together in a non-assimilative, respectful manner” (Kovach, 2021, p. 190). It is a space, Ermine argues, that allows both Indigenous and non-Indigenous Canadians to “step out of our allegiances, to detach from the cages of our mental worlds and assume a position where human-to-human dialogue can occur” in peaceful coexistence (p. 202). The missionaries and YMCA CCH leadership held to a White supremacist notion that their belief system and way of knowing, being, and doing were superior (YMCA, 2006; Snow, 2005). In doing so, they followed a colonial agenda to erase and replace the Stoney Nakoda people, one that has done great harm. Donald (2012) contends:

I am convinced that the task of decolonization in the Canadian context can only occur when Aboriginal peoples and Canadians face each other across historic divide, deconstruct their shared past, and engage critically with the realization that the present and future are similarly tied together. (p. 535)

Indigenous Métissage is an approach to truth-telling that allows these tensions to be made visible and examined. It is an ethical way of relating that does not deny difference but rather seeks to understand more deeply how such differences position us in relation to each other (Donald, 2012). Rather than erasing and excluding Indigenous people's ways of knowing, doing, and being, Indigenous Métissage provides an ethical approach to relating to the human and more-than-human world, fostering respect and reverence. It is an approach that takes "aokakio'ssin, or careful attention to the details of the research context," to place, to the land, to relationship, "with the hope that a story will arise that will need to be told" (Donald, 2012, p. 544).

Reciprocity

As I read and reread the braided texts about Camp Chief Hector, I see how they interact to inform and attend to the difficulties and complexities of the relationship between Indigenous peoples and non-Indigenous peoples (Donald, 2012). They speak of a need for principles to guide Settler engagement with Indigenous people and the land in a good way, of the need for the enactment of reciprocity. Donald (2009) describes reciprocity as a living principle, where acts of kindness create movement toward connectivity and relationality. Reciprocity, from the French word *réciprocité* means *the "state or condition of free interchange, and mutual responsiveness"* (Oxford University Press, n.d.). Often practiced as gift giving, the principles grounding reciprocity are respect, responsibility, and mutuality (Chew & Hinson, 2021; Kovach, 2021). In the University of Calgary's Indigenous Strategy (2017), a strategy developed through consultation with Indigenous partners and Traditional Knowledge Keepers, reciprocity is defined as practices that build relationships that reflect authenticity and equity. Kirkness and Barnhardt (2001), when describing reciprocity, emphasize the importance of give-and-take relationships, characterized by vulnerability and that "open up new levels of understanding for everyone" (p. 1). When I engage with Indigenous partners, I take time to prepare culturally appropriate gifts of gratitude out of respect for the time and knowledge they have shared with me. I also consider

how my work might benefit the partner and their community. In contrast, the relationship between the YMCA leadership and the Stoney Nakoda Nation was not reciprocal or beneficial to the Stoney Nakoda people. The leaders came to extract land and culture. As Elder Alice notes, they came to exclude and exploit our land, resources, and people (personal communication, January 25, 2022).

As I consider how this research project focuses on understanding White Settler development through experiences like camp, I am cognizant of the importance of enacting the principle of reciprocity. During my interaction with Elder Alice, she invited me to visit with her this summer and to participate in the reconciliation process between the Stoney Nakoda people and the YMCA (personal communication, January 25, 2022). I want to ensure that I am building trusting relationships so that I can learn about what reciprocity means to Alice and her community. I don't want to assume that I know what their priorities are or that my acts of reciprocity are meaningful. As Alice warned, I must remain humble and open to learn.

Drawing on Métis Elder Maria Campbell's teachings, Donald (2021) connects our responsibilities and reciprocal obligations to both human to human relationships and human to more-than-human world. Given the Settler colonial orientation to land as property, shifting to a mutually beneficial, or reciprocal relationship with land is a different way of relating. Land is no longer an object to be exploited but a more-than-human entity to be respected and engaged. As Potawatomi scholar Robin Kimmerer (2013) describes an Indigenous understanding of reciprocal relationships that extends to the more-than-human world:

Cultures of gratitude must also be cultures of reciprocity. Each person, human or no, is bound to every other in a reciprocal relationship. Just as all beings have a duty to me, I have a duty to them. If an animal gives its life to feed me, I am in turn bound to support its life. If I receive a stream's gift of pure water, then I am responsible for returning a gift in kind. An integral part of a human's education is to know those duties and how to perform them. (p. 115)

Kimmerer's explanation of reciprocity with nature encourages me to show gratitude and act responsibly. I also find the teachings from Narcisse Blood (2012) on the concept of *aoksisowaato'p* to be a helpful guide, as the "ethical importance of visiting a place as an act of relational renewal that is life-giving and life-sustaining, both to the place and to ourselves" (p. 48). As I walked the path to the Grand Council site during my return visit to the Camp, I noticed how my attention turned to a large tree, seeing her as animated and present in a way that was new for me. Though this way of relating to land is not natural or even comfortable, by following the protocols and living into these teachings, such as offering tobacco and offering prayers, my relationship with the land is being transformed. I am cognizant of my need to learn and grow. Once again, Alice's encouragement to remain open and humble ring true.

Responsibility

Once again, I reflect on the insights that arise from a careful reading of the textual braid. I am struck by the ways the juxtaposed stories and accounts come together to speak to me, revealing understandings that call for ethical forms of relationality. More through its absence than its presence, I see how relationships are strengthened by the enactment of an Indigenous understanding of responsibility. In her book on Indigenous Storywork, Stó:lō scholar Jo-Ann Archibald (2008) speaks to the principle of responsibility when engaging in research, storytelling, and engagement with community members. She refers to her responsibility to her ancestors and the generations yet to come when considering the impact of her work. Responsibility, meaning "fact of condition of being responsible, accountable, or answerable" is derived from the Latin word *re-* "back" and *spondere* "to pledge," speaking to an obligation to be reliable and trustworthy (Oxford University Press, n.d.). Similarly, Leigh Patel (2016) suggests answerability as a construct that can help articulate how educational researchers challenge coloniality in a manner that moves beyond discourse to action. Answerability includes aspects of being both responsible, and accountable.

When I consider the way the YMCA leaders treated the Stoney Nakoda people, I see little evidence of their trustworthiness and accountability. Instead, they enacted exploitative practices with little consideration of the impact on the Stoney Nakoda Nation. As a child who participated at camp, I feel responsible—to tell the truth about the harms done at camp and to participate in acts of reconciliation. The YMCA worked to erase the Stoney Nakoda people from my consciousness. Through storytelling, I am bringing to light a more truthful story about camp. I am calling out the Settler-made divide in order to relate differently, to be answerable to the Stoney Nakoda people, believing that right actions might extend to the ancestors, and the children yet to come.

In her book, *Braiding Sweetgrass*, Kimmerer (2013) contrasts an Indigenous and Settler conceptualization of responsibility by emphasizing the difference in relationship to land. Rather than feeling responsible to land, she maintains Settlers relate to land as property, capital, and resources to be extracted. She notes:

But to our people, it was everything: identity, the connection to our ancestors, the home of our nonhuman kinfolk, our pharmacy, our library, the source of all that sustained us. Our lands were where our responsibility to the world was enacted, sacred ground. It belonged to itself; it was a gift, not a commodity, so it could never be bought or sold. (p. 17)

Land is not conceptualized as being different from Indigenous people but in relationship in a manner that is difficult to describe in English. She continues,

A language teacher I know explained that grammar is just the way we chart relationships in language. Maybe it also reflects our relationships with each other. Maybe a grammar of animacy could lead us to whole new ways of living in the world, other species as sovereign people, a world with a democracy of species, not a tyranny of one—with moral responsibility to water and wolves, and with a legal system that recognizes the standing of the other species. It's all in the pronouns. (p. 57-58)

As a Settler, I am growing increasingly aware of how much Settler society has shaped my conceptualization of land. However, I can see time spent relating to the land as more-than-human is helping to shift my relationship and my sense of responsibility to the land. As Kimmerer notes, the English language doesn't quite fit the anthropomorphism called for by such a way of relating. As awkward as it is to describe this shift, I think of myself on the path to the Grand Council site and how differently I was beginning to conceptualize the tree and the wolves. They were becoming more real and more-than-human to me. I wonder whether I had received this teaching as a child whether this way of relating would have been much more accessible. Would I have greeted the trees in friendship? My child-self was so open and free. I trust I would have welcomed such teaching had it been available. As an adult, this shift accompanies a growing sense of responsibility, one that prompts me to seek changes in Settler society that better protects the legal standing of land. I wonder how different things might be if a shift in Settler society is realized. Might there be a day when Settler treatment of land as property is as abhorrent as the enslavement of humans has become?

One thing is clear to me—the way things were done at CCH and in broader society has done tremendous harm. I must bear witness to the stories and own my part (Regan, 2010). As I consider what acting responsibly means in my relationships to Indigenous people, and land, I agree with Kovach that responsibility implies knowledge and action (Kovach, 2009). To move forward in a good way must include answerability and accountability as defined by Indigenous people. Chew and Hinson (2021) suggest the following ethical guidelines for enacting responsibility: show respect, be visible to the community, listen and observe before questioning, reciprocate gifts, be careful with the knowledge that is given, and be humble. Following such practices will take time, effort, and responsibility to conduct myself in a manner that honours the knowledge I have been given.

Kinship Relationality

The experience of having a blanket laid on my shoulders by my counsellor had a profound effect on me as a child. It signaled that I belonged. Despite the counterfeit nature of the ceremony, I believed I was being welcomed into a tribal family. As I consider the ways the experience at Grand Council was a harmful facsimile of Indigenous culture, I find myself drawn to the concept of kinship relationality, the sense of true belonging my child-self yearned for. Kinship, according to Justice (2018) exists between humans, and extends to the more-than-human world, where relationships of obligations and responsibilities create a network of connections and belonging. As Sioux scholar Ella Cara Deloria (2016) writes:

[T]he ultimate aim of Dakota life, stripped of all accessories, was quite simple: One must obey kinship rules; one must be a good relative. No Dakota who has participated in that life will dispute that. In the last analysis every other consideration was secondary—property, personal ambition, glory, good times, life itself. Without that aim and the constant struggle to attain it, the people would no longer be Dakotas in truth. They would no longer even be human. To be a good Dakota, then, was to be humanized, civilized. And to be civilized was to keep the rules imposed by kinship for achieving civility, good manners, and a sense of responsibility toward every individual dealt with. (p.23)

As both Justice and Deloria contend, being a good relative is tied inextricably to being a good human.

Within the Stoney Nakoda culture, the notion of family extends beyond the Western conceptualization of family, which tends to favour the nuclear family, to include the community or tribe and the land (Friesen & Snow, 2014; Kelly, 2005). Unlike a Western understanding of family obligation which is more restrictive, a Stoney Nakoda understanding of kinship obligation takes “priority over employment, schooling, government responsibilities and general maintenance of all types,” a difference

that can make for conflict for community members who interact with westernized colonial institutions like the school system (Friesen & Snow, 2014, p. 23).

Donald (2021) describes kinship relationality as the “enmeshment within kinship relations that connect all forms of life...networks of human and more than human relations that enmesh us [and] become vivified and apparent” (p. 54). He upholds kinship relationality as a counter story to the troubling, unethical ways Indigenous and non-Indigenous Canadians relate; how non-Indigenous Canadians deny relationships with Indigenous peoples. A more life-giving way of relating is one based on the ancient teachings that harken to the original treaty commitments Indigenous people made to honour the buffalo, one that has been “gradually replaced by the emerging story of a Canadian nation and nationality” (p. 56). Donald argues educators must learn “how to facilitate the emergence of a new story that can repair colonial divides and give good guidance on how to proceed differently” (p. 57). Canadians must begin to relate to humans and the more-than-human as relatives, as kin who are interconnected and responsible for each other.

What It Is Not

“No! My great-grandmother was not a Cherokee princess!” quipped Kim Tallbear (2019, p. 28), a Sisseton Wahpeton Oyate scholar, in response to the all-too-common Settler practice of claiming Indigenous ancestry without lived experience or connection to the people or the land. Either by retelling a family myth of a Cherokee great-grandmother, so distant that no one remembers anything more or by way of a purchased DNA test, Settlers claim indigeneity through genetic ancestry without the social relations with the people or the land. Sioux scholar Vine Deloria (1988) named this type of mythical Settler nativism the Indian-grandmother complex, an attempt to avoid their guilt for participating in and benefitting from colonialism. This move to innocence, as Tuck and Yang (2012) coined it, is “an attempt to deflect a Settler identity, while continuing to enjoy Settler privilege and occupying stolen land” (p. 12). This move aligns with a national mythology lived out in Settler societies, where through distant

Indigenous ancestry, White Settlers believe they were first on the land (thus true and rightful owners and occupiers of the land) while simultaneously maintaining the privileges of Whiteness without the kinship obligations and responsibilities to Indigenous communities. Settler nativism, argues Tuck and Yang, is about “imagining an Indian past and a settler future” (p. 13) without having to dismantle the Settler state. The program at CCH taught me to think of myself as Indigenous by modelling playing Indian (Deloria, 1998) and inviting me to join a mythical tribal family. This move to innocence facilitated the drive to erase Indigenous people from my Settler consciousness and replace it with Settlers as beneficiaries of Canada’s Settler colonial society.

Justice (2018) contends that non-Indigenous Canadians are at particular risk for confused kinship relationality because their sense of belonging is in flux. Few have a connection to the people or the land from which their ancestors came. As a Scottish/English/Irish/German Canadian, it can feel easier to just be Canadian rather than think through my messy/distant European ancestral connections. I had the privilege of meeting distant Scottish relatives when visiting my ancestor's former home in Scotland when I was thirteen years old. Thus, I feel a stronger sense of connection to my Scottish roots. However, I have only visited the Romanian and English villages where my grandparents were born through photographs from my parents' visits, and I only have proof of my Irish ancestry through my great grandparents' census records. With this distant, imagined connection to my European ancestors, I understand how many Canadians just want to call themselves Canadian, particularly White Canadians who rarely have their sense of belonging questioned. However, this Settler conceptualization of being Canadian is often based on a mythical understanding of Canada's history, which erases and replaces Indigenous people and fails to contend with the Settler relationship to Indigenous people and the land (Regan, 2010). Non-Indigenous Canadians need a way to be in relationship to themselves, Indigenous people, and the land that is life-giving and life-sustaining for all. As Justice notes:

to be a good relative, then, in whatever ways that might be realized, is to counter these exploitative forces and the stories that legitimize them, while at the same time affirming — or reaffirming— better, more generative, more generous ways to uphold our obligations and our commitments to our diverse and varied kin. (p. 84)

I wonder if the braiding together of kinship relationality, treaty responsibilities, and transformative reconciliation might provide a more hopeful way of helping non-Indigenous Canadians to be a good relative.

In this chapter, I oriented towards Indigenous principles to help me understand how to relate to Indigenous people and land in more ethical and life-giving ways. I considered how the principles of respect, reverence, reciprocity, responsibility, and kinship relationality could act as a teacher and guide to being a better relative with kinship responsibilities (Archibald, 2008; Donald, 2012; 2021; Justice, 2018). In many ways, my experiences at camp taught me harmful ways of relating with Indigenous people and the land—now, I look for ways to apply the lessons I’ve been taught— to live out what I’ve learned in a good way. In the following chapter, I consider how Treaty 7, the Truth and Reconciliation (2015) Calls to Action, and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples act as a guide forward.

Chapter 6

Making White Man's Sons Better Than Their Forefathers

The words of Chief Hector Crawler and Walking Buffalo continue to ring out, unanswered; a call “to make the white men’s sons better than their fathers” (Tierney & YMCA, 1980, p. 3). After facing three years of relentless pressure to permit the camp to proceed on Stoney Nakoda land, the two men agreed to support the camp with the hope it would transform the children and set them on a better path. The braided story of CCH speaks to the ongoing need for transformation of individuals who were formed by CCH, to the community of CCH that continues to bear Chief Hector’s name despite the offence such naming carries for the nation, and to Canada’s Settler colonial society that continues to harm Indigenous people and land. As I walk this journey of coming to understand the ways experiences like summer camp formed my Settler identity and the ways this story both reflects and connects to the larger Canadian narrative of Settler colonialism in Canada, I long for things to be different. I look for a way forward that is truthful and hopeful—truthful about the continued harms of colonialism and hopeful for a way forward that is imbued with respect, reverence, reciprocity, responsibility, and kinship relationality.

In the early days of CCH, Chief Hector Crawler and Walking Buffalo showed up daily to help build the camp. Though their voices were not heeded, they put effort into relationship building with Settlers, with the hopes of finding ethical and vivifying ways to relate. I look to Rev. John Snow Jr., an ecumenical leader from the Stoney Nakoda Nation, who challenged me to address the issue of reconciliation in light of treaty, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action, and United Nations Declaration of Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP); to consider the ways Indigenous perspectives on these important documents guide much needed action of non-Indigenous Canadians.

Treaty Responsibility

As I consider guidance from Indigenous peoples, I find myself turning to Treaty 7, the numbered treaty that governs the relationship between First Nations and the government in the territory where CCH is situated. Signed on September 22, 1877, at Blackfoot Crossing by leaders of the Blackfoot Confederacy, the Tsuut'ina, and the Stoney Nakoda, the Treaty remains in effect with its accompanying obligations and responsibilities (Snow, 2005). As with the “complex and often ‘messy’ threads of relatedness and belonging” that revealed themselves through the story of CCH (Hasebe-Ludt et al., 2009, p. 1), the story of Treaty 7 provides not only a way to understand the historical and current relations between Indigenous people and non-Indigenous Canadians, but also the CCH land negotiations that occurred fifty years later. As I consider the tensions that exist between the Stoney Nakoda Nation and the YMCA, I wonder if an Indigenous conceptualization of treaty might provide guidance for the changes required to reconcile the relationship.

To signatory First Nations leaders, Treaty 7 was a peace treaty, signed in ceremony with a peace pipe (Treaty 7 Elders et al., 1996). The leaders were familiar with treaties as many alliances of peace existed between Indigenous nations before European contact. The nations had existing complex governance systems. The leaders entered this peace treaty with the peace pipe and sacred smudge because “only ceremony could seal an accord that would last ‘as long as the sun would shine and as long as the river would flow’” (p. 15). From the Indigenous perspective, this was an agreement to share the land with the Settlers, and not to surrender the land, a necessity given the rapidly diminishing buffalo herds and the nations need for security, education, medicine, and annuity payments. As Cree legal scholar Gina Starblanket (2019) notes, “Indigenous peoples understand treaties to represent land-use agreements that are intended to delineate frameworks of nonhierarchical co-existence between nations” (p. 453). The idea of land as property that could be transferred or sold was a foreign concept not relatable in their languages or cultures. For the Stoney Nakoda Nation:

the land was created for its indigenous inhabitants—animal, bird, and man. Our philosophy of life is to live in harmony with nature and in accordance with the creation of the Great Spirit. Anyone wanting to live by those principles is more than welcome, and if he wants to, he may participate in our traditional ways, religion, and culture. He does not have to make a treaty with us to do this. (Snow, 2005, p. 33)

Had the Settlers come to the territory with the intention of respecting the nation's culture and living in peaceful co-existence, they would have been welcomed. Years later, when the YMCA leadership approached the Stoney Nakoda Nation to negotiate a lease agreement, they wrongly assumed a signed document and monies gave them the right to occupy the land and run a camp based on their own assumptions about Indigenous cultures (YMCA, 2005). In violation of the protocols of the land on which he stood, Moncosa raised the peace pipe to the four directions, leading generations of Settler children to believe they could live on the land without relationship to the Stoney Nakoda Nation and without peace. I wonder if the impact of the camp would have been different if the YMCA leaders had approached the Stoney Nakoda Council with humility and an open heart to learn and co-exist for their mutual benefit, perhaps even being invited to lead ceremonies at the camp as a way to teach the children who attended the camp a different way to relate to the land and the Stoney culture. I also wonder how today's CCH leadership might turn towards the Stoney Nakoda Nation, acknowledging the harm done, asking for forgiveness, and asking the nation how they would like them to proceed. Might the four principles that arose from the braided story in this dissertation guide a nation-to-Settler organization relationship—one that is no longer one-sided in its benefit to camp?

The Royal Proclamation of 1763 structured the relationship between the Crown and First Nations by recognizing Indigenous rights and title and requiring the Crown to negotiate treaties as nation-to-nation (Starblanket, 2019). Treaty 7 was one of many numbered treaties negotiated in Canada between 1871 and 1921 to facilitate colonial expansion and possession of Indigenous land. Though the

Royal Proclamation recognized the right to self-determination, the treaty negotiations were structured unfairly, and the First Nations leaders' intentions were not honoured. Given their patterned behaviour of erasure and harm, I am not surprised that the Crown negotiated the treaty in bad faith, saying the Indigenous people ceded and surrendered title to the land and relinquished their rights in exchange for a limited spectrum of rights and entitlements (Starblanket, 2019). The First Nations soon realized the Eurocentric interpretation of the treaty cast Indigenous people as subordinate, reproducing structures of political domination and possession of land while failing to meet their obligations such as education, medicine, and protecting rights to hunt and fish (Snow, 2005; Starblanket, 2019). As Chief John Snow from Stoney Nakoda stated:

If my forefathers had known what all this would mean to our people: the disappearance of the buffalo and diminishing of other game, the restrictive game laws, the plowing and fencing off of all the lands, more whiteman's diseases, attacks on our religion, culture, and way of life, the continual eroding of our other treaty rights; if they could have foreseen the creation of provincial parks, natural areas, wilderness areas, the building of dams, and the flooding of our traditional hunting areas, they never would have signed Treaty 7. (p. 41)

The treaties became the vehicle for extinguishing Indigenous title and making way for Settler expansion. The Crown lied to the First Nations leaders. The Eurocentric conceptualization of treaty continues to unequally shape the relationship and the lived experience of both Indigenous and non-Indigenous Canadians.

In the 1920s, the YMCA leaders found the Stoney Nakoda Council was resistant to their request to lease the land (YMCA, 2005). Given Nation's experience with Settler government during the treaty negotiations, it is understandable why the Council was hesitant to trust the YMCA leadership. Perhaps it was their experience with negotiating with the Crown that taught them to slow down the process and require lengthy negotiations to secure the land lease for CCH. The YMCA leaders wanted a camp on

Stoney Nakoda land to benefit their own children while the Stoney Nakoda people offered to share the land in hopes that the camp might “make the white men’s sons better than the white men had been” (Tierney & YMCA, 1980, p. 3). Much as Chief John Snow’s forefathers grieved over the signing of Treaty 7, I suspect the Council soon regretted their decision to trust the YMCA leadership, a relationship that further exploited and excluded their people.

A Better Way

I am left wondering how an Indigenous conceptualization of treaty might provide guidance for Indigenous and non-Indigenous relations in Canada. The current colonial interpretation of treaties has served to extinguish Indigenous peoples’ rights and claims of sovereignty and jurisdiction, standing in direct contrast with the spirit and intent of the treaty relationships as understood by treaty Elders (Starblanket, 2019; Treaty 7 Elders et al., 1996). Starblanket (2019) contends that “treaty-based frameworks for relating, as generally understood by Indigenous peoples, represent diplomatic processes for negotiating relations of non-violent and generative co-existence between living beings in shared geography” (p. 444). Treaties are dynamic, relational, and contextual, making allowances for the continuity of different ways of being in shared spaces and provide a framework to help navigate those tensions and inconsistencies, much like Ermine’s (2007) notion of ethical space. However, many non-Indigenous Canadians fail to consider the relational nature of treaty, their treaty obligations, and responsibilities. This ‘colonial unknowing’ functions to reproduce harmful structures of colonialism. Starblanket (2019) argues:

the lack of clarity surrounding treaties sustains a number of mythologies that fuel racial divides between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples in Canada, such as the notion that all Indigenous peoples are excused from paying federal taxes or receive free post-secondary education, health, and dental care as treaty rights. Such perceptions are not only highly

inaccurate but also abstract the conversations away from the underlying treaty relationship and toward competing assertions and counter-assertions surrounding fixed treaty terms. (p. 454)

I wonder if a more truthful “rereading of the influence of the past on current relationships and contemplating the ways in which Indigenous wisdom traditions and knowledge systems can enhance our understanding of what it means to live in the place now called Canada” (Donald, 2012, p. 533). Might the story of CCH as told in its historical context help provide the impetus for non-Indigenous Canadians to reverse this ‘colonial unknowing’ and begin to see how the structures like camp reproduce the harms of colonialism through the erasure and replacement of Indigenous people? Might it act as a counter curriculum to the difficult inheritance (Mishra Tarc, 2011)? How might a return to treaty sensibilities, as interpreted by Treaty Elders provide guidance for a transformed relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Canadians in this territory. How might it change if we see all ourselves as Treaty People with obligations and responsibilities to each other?

We are all Treaty People

In her article *Treaties Made in Good Faith*, Cree Scholar Sharon Venne (2007) centres the concepts of land and Indigenous rights in her discussion about non-Indigenous people living well in Canada. Venne calls on non-Indigenous people to respect the land, saying, “non-Indigenous people are forgetting to have respect for the land and all its relationships” (p. 7). As Settlers are socialized to relate to land as property and to erase and replace Indigenous people, a shift in relationship is required (Regan, 2010; Venne, 2007). Settler scholar Jennifer MacDonald notes, “it will be a lifelong, and deeply layered process to unlearn colonial ways, but there are ways I can practice being a good treaty person each day—both in my human-to-human and human-to-more-than-human relations” (MacDonald & Markides, 2018, p. 227). By spending time on the land, paying close attention and practicing *aoksisowaato’p*, I found my own relationship with land shifting (Blood et al., 2012). Venne also notes the importance of respecting Indigenous sovereignty. She recalls, “As Nations, we had our

own governments, our own laws, our own political and legal systems operating in our territories. These were all in place at the time of contact with colonizers” (p. 3). If the Royal Proclamation of 1763 instructed the Crown to negotiate treaty nation-to-nation, it makes sense that a move forward is a move towards Indigenous sovereignty and rights, one that restores what was taken. As a visitor who lives, works, and plays on Treaty 7 land, it is important that I learn about the treaty agreement that structures the relationships on this territory. By committing to learn more about this relationship and my obligations, I can advocate for changes that respect the treaties and lead to reconciliation. Guided by the principles of respect, reciprocity, responsibility, and kinship relationality, I can seek to be a better relative on this land.

Reconciliation

“Though Canadians talk about restoring good relations, reconciliation in practice is conceptually weak and morally flawed; it assuages Settler guilt in ways that benefit the majority population while failing to make any substantive difference in the lives of Indigenous people” (Alfred, 2005, p. 151). As I consider how I proceed towards reconciliation, I need to heed Kanien’kehá:ka scholar Taiaiake Alfred’s warning. Justice (2018) also reminds me that conversations about reconciliation often fail to start with truth, noting Canada’s “longstanding commitment to historical amnesia when it comes to Indigenous issues” (p. 158). Regan (2010) contends that for Settlers,

the promise of reconciliation is grounded in a false hope that we can somehow compartmentalize the past without facing the history that is still alive. We are loath to give up our cherished peacemaker myth, with its imaginary Indians who are problematic, in order to unmask the ugly truths about the settler problem. Still casting ourselves as neutral arbiters of justice intent on saving Indians, we now focus on their needs to heal themselves and reconcile with us. (p. 116)

Accounts like my experiences at summer camp can uncover the ways normalized childhood experiences were in fact Settler colonial formation stories. Such “narratives of personal experience are always connected to social, political, cultural, and historical dynamics of identity, values, and transformative possibilities” (Chambers et al., 2012, p. xxvii). Settler experiences, like CCH, were an outworking of a colonial curriculum teaching children that Settlers could perform Indigenous ceremonial practices. In that way, the Indigenous person was no longer needed, and their practices and ceremonies could be and were appropriated.

Many Settlers try to make reconciliation comfortable by framing it as something familiar and non-threatening, rather than willingly grappling with the uncomfortable truth about Canada’s genocidal history (MacDonald, 2020). MacDonald speaks to our need to disrupt the ‘unconscious ideology’ and common-sense understanding about ourselves as tolerant, kind, and worthy of respect on the world stage, a belief that stops us from critically reflecting on our true nature. I believe the story of CCH juxtaposed with the socio-historical perspective provides a truth-telling moment. It is a first step, sufficient to trouble the assumption that all is well. Justice (2018) argues that reckoning with the truth requires accountability from hearing, embracing, and answering the truth. It is a slow, painful, necessary process of bearing witness and asking about settlers’ culpability. As a former camper at CCH, the story of camp revealed the harmful ways I was taught to relate to Indigenous people and the land. The pain and discomfort of discovering the CCH leaders lied to me about the authenticity of the ceremonies shook me and destabilized my understanding of who I was as a Canadian. As an adult, I carried the guilt of having participated in harm. It caused me to re-turn to the place to make amends. In my return, I discovered a path that led me towards a relationship with Elder Alice and John Snow Jr., a friendship where I can learn a different way forward. A relationship where I can live out a counter curriculum informed by the principles of respect, reciprocity, responsibility, and kinship relationality.

As Canadians move towards reconciliation, it is important to have a clear understanding of what reconciliation means. Sadly, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (2015) found the government of Canada held to an anemic understanding of reconciliation that maintains and validates Crown sovereignty and parliamentary supremacy while Indigenous people view reconciliation as an opportunity to affirm their own sovereignty. Craft and Regan (2020) argue reconciliation must move beyond rhetoric and symbolic change to structural changes that dismantle structures of oppression. Sheryl Lightfoot, an Anishinaabe scholar, (2016) contends that many Canadians are comfortable extending soft rights to Indigenous people, such as rights to language and culture— accommodations that do not threaten the legitimacy and capacity of the Settler state. Such accommodations, she argues, may increase their legitimacy when responding to past injustices. However, the extension of hard rights, such as self-determination and land rights, are less commensurable with the current structures of the Settler state. Reconciliation, she argues, is about “dismantling the old systems and structures that are based on the assumptions of European supremacy and creating new ones based in justice and mutual respect” (Lightfoot, 2020, p. 269). It is important for non-Indigenous Canadians to support Indigenous sovereignty and land rights as an outworking of reconciliation.

The textual braid about CCH has helped me to see the harmful ways Settlers relate to land as property and how Settler colonialism works to erase and replace Indigenous people. The braided stories with an emphasis on land and place-stories act as a decolonizing influence to illuminate how the curriculum of camp and Settler society acted to malform me (Donald, 2009). As a Settler who was taught to relate to land as property, I can see how my relationship to land is shifting and helping me to be open to claims of Indigenous sovereignty and land rights. I am learning what it means to support both soft and hard rights, and what it means to be a good relative.

On a national level, it is important that I advocate for Indigenous sovereignty and pressure the government to take agreements like the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*

(2008) seriously. The declaration is a comprehensive statement affirming the pre-existing individual and collective human rights of Indigenous people, including the rights to self-determination. Though the government has been slow to implement the declaration, Marc Miller (2021), the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations says,

The priorities and rights of First Nations, Inuit and Métis will be the starting point for this historic work to implement the Act and put the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples into action. This is a critically important opportunity to work together on concrete measures to address injustices, combat prejudice, and end systemic racism and discrimination. We will work together to promote and uphold Indigenous rights, which are the roots from which justice, equality and respect will grow. (para. 6)

I envision ways I can use my voice for change. In this dissertation I have told the truth of CCH. It is one among many such accounts that dominate the Canadian landscape. Acts of reconciliation need to begin with telling the truth. One way I have done this is to meet with representatives of the YMCA to see the ways they might reconcile with the Stoney Nakoda people and take actions like renaming the camp. This is an ongoing process I am eager to join, but one that must be led by the nation.

When the Honorable Justice Murray Sinclair, Chair of the TRC, was asked to convey one overarching message to non-Indigenous Canadians about the work of the Commission, he highlighted the need to revitalize the relationship between non-Indigenous peoples and Indigenous Canadians (TRC, 2015). Sinclair stressed the need to change the way non-Indigenous people are educated about Indigenous people, racism, and colonialism that are firmly embedded in the structures, systems, and institutions in Canada. The TRC recalled:

For much of our history, all Canadian children—Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal alike—were taught that Aboriginal people were inferior, savage, and uncivilized, and that Aboriginal languages, spiritual beliefs, and ways of life were irrelevant. Aboriginal people were depicted as

having been a dying race, saved from destruction by the intervention of humanitarian Europeans. Since little that was taught about Aboriginal people was positive, the system led non-Aboriginal people to believe they were inherently superior. (TRC, 2012, p. 2-3)

Non-Indigenous people have problematized Indigenous peoples and cultures based on assumptions and lies (Regan, 2010). Camp Chief Hector and its fake Indigenous program was one of many camps across Canada where Settler children were socialized to erase and replace Indigenous people. Now is the time to tell the truth. Regan calls for non-Indigenous people to be unsettled from their comfortable place of assumed dominance and superiority and challenged to rethink their beliefs and assumptions about themselves, Indigenous people, and the history of Canada.

As an educator in post-secondary education, I am challenged to address Calls to action specific to nursing education. The TRC (2015) Call to Action 24 states:

We call upon medical and nursing schools in Canada to require all students to take a course dealing with Aboriginal health issues, including the history and legacy of residential schools, the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*, Treaties and Aboriginal rights, and Indigenous teachings and practices. This will require skills-based training in intercultural competency, conflict resolution, human rights, and anti-racism. (p. 3)

I am compelled to find creative, embodied ways to help student nurses to learn about Canada's colonial legacy and the ways Indigenous health issues are shaped by colonial structures. I invite students to bear witness to the historical narratives and the current examples of colonial harms such as learning about the untimely deaths of Brian Sinclair and Joyce Echequan, Indigenous people who died from neglect linked to anti-Indigenous racism in health care institutions (McCallum & Perry, 2018; McCallum et al., 2021). By helping students to make personal connections to the harms of colonialism through story, I invite them to problematize colonialism and remain open to learning about the strengths and beauty of Indigenous peoples and culture. I also invite them into relationship with Indigenous people, to learn to

respect and honour their cultures. After completing a practicum placement at the Stoney Nakoda High School in Morley, nursing students received a challenge from Melanie Bingham, the school's guidance counsellor saying, "We welcomed you here to learn about our culture and our ways. When we come to your institutions, your hospitals, and schools, we trust you will welcome us well" (personal communication, April 2019). Through relationship building opportunities, the students are learning to relate to Indigenous peoples in ethically relational ways, to be good relatives.

For non-Indigenous people in Canada, this inquiry speaks to the importance of pausing to critically reflect on one's positionality. Within nursing education, the ways in which nurses position themselves in the narrative of Canada and relate to Indigenous people has tangible implications for nursing practice. McCallum and colleagues (2021) suggest many nurses in Canada hold negative stereotypes of Indigenous people that stem from a faulty understanding of Canada's Settler colonial history and these racist stereotypes influence the care nurses provide as evidenced by the tragic stories of Indigenous people like Brian Sinclair and Joyce Echaquan. I want to invite nursing students and faculty to think deeply about the assumptions they make about Canadian history, Indigenous people, and land. By inviting nursing students and faculty to think through their understanding of themselves in relation to a more truthful narrative of Canada, they can learn to question the assumptions they make about Indigenous people (Freire, 1970/2020). This pedagogy of the pause to reflect on the stories that inform settler colonial shaped understanding of history, Indigenous people, and land holds promise for a different way of being in relationship, one that opens non-Indigenous nurses to embrace their kinship responsibilities to the human and more-than-human world.

The TRC's (2015) Final Report states, "all Canadians have a critical role to play in advancing reconciliation in ways that honour and revitalize the nation-to-nation Treaty relationships" (p. 237). Action is needed to repair the relationship between non-Indigenous and Indigenous Canadians, to heal the inherited colonial divides that replicate harm (Donald, 2021). The Calls to Action and UNDRIP speak

to the changes required through action informed by Elders and Traditional Knowledge Keepers to transform Settler colonial society. To realize these needed changes, each Canadian is called to act and influence change within their spheres of influence, to bring about changes within themselves, their communities, and society. Non-Indigenous and Indigenous peoples need a new way of relating, a renewed path towards each other. As Justice Murray Sinclair declared, “without truth, justice, and healing, there can be no genuine reconciliation. Reconciliation is not about ‘closing a sad chapter of Canada’s past,’ but about opening new healing pathways of reconciliation that are forged in truth and justice” (TRC. 2015, p. 97).

This dissertation project started with my desire to understand and transform my relationship to Indigenous people and land. Through my work with Indigenous Elders and community members in nursing education, I had a growing desire interrogate my Settler formation story and uncover how my childhood experiences spoke to the topic of White Settler identity. I felt troubled by my experiences at camp and longed to better understand how they acted to form my White Settler identity. I trusted there was a story to tell and believed that this story held within it the knowledges, relationships, and the possibility of transformation (Kovach, 2009). In my return to camp to make amends, I had an unsettling, but deeply meaningful encounter with wolves that stopped me from advancing on my intended path and set me on a different path that led to Elder Alice and Rev. John Snow Jr. Through these relationships I grew in my awareness of a different ethic of relating. As Donald notes:

This ethic holds that the past occurs simultaneously in the present and influences how we conceptualize the future. It requires we see ourselves related to and implicated in, the lives of those who have gone before us and those yet to come. It is an ethical imperative to recognize the significance of the relationships we have with others, how our histories and experiences are layered and position us in relation to each other, and how our futures as people simultaneously are tied together. (2009, p. 7)

It is within relationship to Indigenous people and land that I will learn how to live out this different ethic, one that honours treaty and supports Indigenous sovereignty.

Having received teachings and support from Elder Alice Kaquitts and Rev. John Snow Jr., I am accountable and answerable to live out these teachings in a good way. Patel (2016) argues it is not enough to name the ways Settler colonialism is at work in me and in the world, but I am called to maintain relationships with Indigenous people and be ready to answer the hard questions about whether or not the outworking of this inquiry has tangible benefits for them. As a former camper from CCH with a growing understanding of the impact the camp had on the Stoney Nakoda people, it is my responsibility to steward this knowledge well. Elder Alice's invitation to participate in the reconciliation process between the Stoney Nakoda nation and the YMCA is one way I can do so. I am also well positioned to invite former campers and counsellors to critically reflect on the truths about camp. Under the guidance of Elders and community members, we can learn how to be better relatives to the human and more-than-human world.

The story about CCH is a truthful story that spoke to both the particulars of the camp and to Canada's Settler colonial story. It is the story about the ways land was secured and used as property. It is a story about the ways Indigenous culture was appropriated and Settlers educated their children the same as their forefathers, rather than making them better. It became an entry point, an aperture, into the colonial story that named complicity and called for accountability. As Donald (2012) acknowledges,

We are drawn into a story by the desire to make meaning and transform our sense of who and where. The story we hear has the potential to become part of our own story and thus change our lives. (p. 549)

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