

Chapter 2

I-witness Holocaust Field School

I-witness Holocaust Field School Experiences, Indigenous Peoples, and Reconciliation in Canada

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Introduction

In this chapter I discuss my personal and profound experiences, as an Indigenous student, on the I-witness Holocaust Field School (2012) at the University of Victoria.¹ This experience helped to shape my understanding of colonialism and genocide. This aspect of Indigenous

¹ Editor's note: While this book reflects mostly on experiences from the “Narratives of Memory, Migration, and Xenophobia in the European Union and Canada Field School, Dawn Smith's contribution brings together these reflections with her own experiences as an Indigenous Canadian woman participating in an earlier field school organized through UVic – the I-witness Holocaust Field School.

peoples' lives, along with self-determination, are typically not something that most Canadians spend time thinking about. Although things are slowly changing with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada report (2015), surprisingly little is known about Indigenous peoples, including the issue of self-determination, the ugly history, the current reality, and the circumstances facing Indigenous peoples today. This chapter examines more closely the ongoing genocide and often overlooked colonial policies and practices that continue to plague Indigenous peoples and communities. Also, the current processes of truth and reconciliation are moving quickly, often overlooking aspects of "truth" in favour of advancing reconciliation.

As Nuu-chah-nulth-aht (a person of Nuu-chah-nulth ancestry) and a child of a survivor of the Indian Residential Schools (IRS) system, I have spent a good part of my life trying to understand why Canadians hate us (Indigenous peoples) so much. The daily experiences of walking in a colonized country teach me to be wary and cautious, but also to be courageous, particularly in an effort to confront the injustices Indigenous peoples still face today. Only recently have I been able to face colonialism with courage and with less fear, while recognizing that I could not have done this kind of work in isolation. It is difficult and challenging work that requires family and community support, especially when tackling oppression, dispossession, racism, and violence toward Indigenous peoples. Experiences of hatred and intolerance can instill a deep fear of non-Indigenous peoples (police, social workers, etc.), and this conditioned me to run and hide from such issues. As an adult, I never thought I would find the courage and strength to speak out publicly about colonialism, and specifically about acts of racism and intolerance, but somehow here I am, opening myself up to expression and dialogue.

At one point in my life, a particular experience of hatred and intolerance occurred, prompting me to take action (at least in an academic sense). This experience instigated my journey toward understanding the deep roots of colonialism. The following year I happened to stumble upon a poster for the I-witness Holocaust Field School at the University of Victoria (UVic) inviting students to critically examine intolerance, racism, and antisemitism. Curiosity led me to a pre-field school information meeting where I found myself amongst like-minded people. I became intrigued and registered for the course.

The field school shed light on the Jewish experiences of genocide and hatred, and for me this was life changing. The field school changed my

understanding not only of my family's experiences of colonialism, but also of the collective experiences of Indigenous peoples.

This chapter begins by exploring ethical considerations when discussing the relationship between memories of different groups in different historical contexts. I then share personal memories of the field school before sharing a Nuu-chah-nulth (NCN) perspective on self-determination. Finally, this chapter addresses the process of truth and reconciliation in Canada. For the purpose of clarification, it should be noted that I do not speak for all Indigenous peoples; I offer only an NCN perspective based on my experiences and observations. As such, it is important to note that NCN self-independence and/or determination, or more specifically, *?uu?uuq"aačii* (oo-oo-qua-chii), is at the heart of the struggle. It remains the most contested aspect of the relationship between NCN (as well as all Indigenous peoples) and the Canadian state.

David MacDonald's (2007) article "First Nations, Residential Schools, and the Americanization of the Holocaust: Rewriting Indigenous Histories in the United States and Canada" speaks to the idea that Indigenous peoples, like myself, use the Holocaust as a tool to advance Indigenous issues. He notes that "a debate has emerged about whether or not the Holocaust is appropriate as a frame of reference" for "other victimized groups seeking increased recognition of their past" (995). Further, he argues that this "victimhood" (995) advances "social and ethnic groups' plight while seeking an apology and/or repatriation" (995–96). MacDonald raises a concern that the Holocaust may become "trivialized" when used irresponsibly, thus minimizing the significance of the Holocaust (996). MacDonald suggests that using the Holocaust as a point of reference takes away from the group's — or in this case, from Indigenous histories — and I would add "takes away from truths."

MacDonald adds that "reinterpreting past victimization through a very distinctive and wholly different series of events" (996) overlooks a group's lived experiences, thus silencing them again. MacDonald's points are valid and must not be overlooked in any discussion of the Holocaust or of Indigenous peoples; to do so would be an injustice to all. Yet, I believe that if we do not discuss colonial and genocidal histories and experiences across time and space, we lose opportunities to learn from one another. Therefore, I find myself moving away from the debate on whether or not Indigenous peoples "hijack the Holocaust" (MacDonald 995) and turning my attention to Michael Rothberg (2009), who writes about remembering the Holocaust in an age of decolonization. Rothberg notes that we must get beyond a competitive

model of memory (5) and move towards a multidirectional one, “which is meant to draw attention to the dynamic transfers that take place between diverse places and times during the act of remembrance” (11).

A shift away from the competitive model, Rothberg argues, is a zero-sum approach to memory and identity where the perception of gain for one side is seen as a loss for the other side (6). Both MacDonald and Rothberg bring to our attention the serious nature of any discussion of the Holocaust, which must not be glossed over, but instead embraced and acknowledged. As such, I have included their voices as a way to highlight these important matters of appropriation of the Holocaust, memory, and identity, while finding ways to move forward with the much-needed conversation regarding global genocide.

My chapter’s focus is an exploration of what it meant to be a participant in the field school, and its lasting impact on my life. My intention is not to discuss every experience of the field school, but rather to convey the feelings that it left deep inside me. The evolving relationship between fellow field school participants, faculty, and others is the opportunity to further one’s own learning(s) while seeking some sort of justice.

This reflection is one extension of that relationship, which I hope supports the continued positive efforts of those who dare to confront global injustices. I have always struggled to articulate what I have learned about colonialism, racism, intolerance, and hatred; however, the field school was perfect for someone like me who has much to learn. I found that the field school not only provided an opportunity to study racism, intolerance, and antisemitism, but also provided a safe place to learn and reflect. As such, I embarked upon this learning journey, and it brought me to Germany, Poland, and the Czech Republic, where I made a number of observations along the way. This section highlights three learnings from the 2012 field school, which include remembrance and the German infatuation with Indigenous peoples.

Memory serves a purpose, giving way to acts of remembrance, in this case the 2012 I-witness Holocaust Field School. This act of remembering does not ignore the current discourse of remembrance, which Rothberg (2009) notes is the focus of his work. Rothberg synthesizes his concerns regarding the “history, representation, biography, memorialization, and politics that motivates many scholars working in cultural studies” (4). He adds that his concerns are not separate “from either history or representation” (4) as “memory nonetheless captures simultaneously the individual, embodied, and lived side and the

collective, social, and constructed side of our relations to the past” (4). As such, I appreciate Rothberg’s multidirectional approach, and it helps me to be mindful as I move forward with sharing my field school experiences. I use the term “remembrance” to describe those experiences, as opposed to the word “memory,” particularly as a way to avoid the politics that surround memory.

I-witness Holocaust Field School

After enrolling in the I-Witness Holocaust Field School, the class came together to socialize, fundraise, and prepare for the academic and experiential learning(s) of studying the Holocaust. The first week was spent in a classroom, at the University of Victoria (UVic), where professors, guest lecturers, and Holocaust survivors helped facilitate our learning(s) in terms of the violent and inhuman crimes of the Holocaust. The first week and the following three weeks were intense, particularly for someone like me who knew little about the Holocaust or Jewish peoples. It was emotional and filled with *yaʔakmis*, a Nuu-chah-nulth (NCN) phrase that translates to “love and pain.” It was one thing to read about the Holocaust, and it was another thing to travel to Europe and meet Holocaust survivors; it was a life-altering experience.

This reflection is *not* an attempt to compare the Holocaust with the experiences of Indigenous peoples on Turtle Island (an Indigenous term used to refer to North America), but instead to draw on and share field school experiences. It is an act of reciprocity. (I am giving back what the field school has given me.) What I recall the most about participating in the field school was this overwhelming feeling of ignorance in terms of what I knew about the Holocaust; however, it was a starting point for learning about global injustices. Berlin, Germany, was the first stop of many, but it was the place where I encountered numerous physical and other diverse types of commemoration or memorialization of the Holocaust. On the second day, the class journeyed to the Sachsenhausen Memorial and Museum, a former concentration camp. It was a place like no other place I have ever seen.

Although now transformed, the open fields and facilities overwhelmed me, as I sat by myself feeling sad but also enraged. I quickly realized that nothing could have prepared me for the actual experience of going to Europe to visit these places of genocide. The following days

were spent in cemeteries, more museums, and also guided tours, where there was a deeper opportunity to learn about the peoples who died at the hands of the National Socialists (Nazis) and also the places that hold these memories. Walking through the old but beautifully lush and green cemeteries is where I reflected the most, particularly on what I had learned that I did not expect to learn. There was so much respect, as there should be, for those who perished in the Holocaust.

It was a feeling that resonated deeply, prompting me to think about family cultural teachings (FCT)² of respect, and how we honour our loved ones who have gone on to the spirit world; and I took great comfort in this. As a child growing up, I loved museums, particularly because I could go and visit the Indigenous part of the museum, where I would spend hours daydreaming about what it must have been like before the Europeans arrived. In Europe, as I wandered through the Jewish Museum in Berlin, I was incredibly impressed, and also taken aback, first by the magnificent architecture, and second by the sheer size of it. Still possessing the same kind of imagination that I had as a child, I wandered through the exhibits trying to absorb the vast amount of information and history. What struck me the most was that in Berlin, Germany (where it all started), there was a Jewish Museum housing artifacts and keeping the past very much alive in the present. This left me with a feeling of hope that perhaps one day there could be an Indigenous museum in Canada run by Indigenous peoples.

The second aspect of the field school that stood out for me was the way in which North American Indigenous peoples were perceived in Europe, or more specifically Germany. For some reason, I always knew that Germans had a fascination with Indigenous peoples and cultures, but what I did not know was how far back in time this fascination went. In a 2018 CBC documentary entitled “Searching for Winnetou,” Drew Hayden Taylor (Ojibway) notes that this fascination goes all the way back to the 19th century, adding that “James Fennimore Cooper’s romantic novel *The Last of the Mohicans*, published in 1826,” was the impetus for this fascination. However, Hayden Taylor states that “the genre really exploded with the publication of the *Winnetou* novels written by Karl May, starting in the 1890s.”

Further, Hayden Taylor travels to Europe to investigate and document this obsession with Indigenous peoples, making note of the influential

2 Family cultural teachings (Smith 2007) embody specific family knowledge(s) and pedagogies, which have been passed down from one generation to the next for decades.

entertainment industry, particularly in Bad Segeberg, Germany, where Karl May's books continue to have a huge influence, drawing thousands of curious people to the live theatrical shows. Hayden Taylor also makes the link to Adolf Hitler and this infatuation. He writes:

Disturbingly, Adolf Hitler and other high-ranking Nazis were also massive fans. The Lakota-Sioux, a nation of plains Natives, was elevated to the status of honorary Aryan. (There is no record of any member of the Lakota-Sioux trying to test what this meant in practice.) Hitler believed that, if the Nazis were to invade America, Native Americans would greet them as liberators.

Hayden Taylor does an exceptional job of unpacking this fascination while examining his own conflicted feelings about the appropriation of indigeneity.

It certainly is worth watching the documentary to determine for yourself if you think it is appropriate in the 21st century to dress up and act like "Indians." Is it appreciation or appropriation? Interestingly enough, there is another example of linkage between Indigenous peoples and Germany that sheds light on the connection to Adolf Hitler. MacDonald (2007) cites David Stannard (1992, 246), who writes that Adolf Hitler "was inspired by America's success at killing its indigenous peoples" (999), adding: "on the way to Auschwitz, the road's pathway led straight through the heart of the Indians of North and South America" (999). I decided to try and follow this theory, and I purchased Hitler's autobiography *Mein Kampf* (1925). It is a thick and intimidating book that I found challenging, and I admit I didn't read it front to back. I had hoped to find the connection to Hitler and North America using Hitler's own words, but I did not succeed.

The further I researched this claim, however, the more evidence I found to support it. In fact, in the Indigenous paper *Indian Country Today*, author Leon Donnelly makes note that "Adolf Hitler himself saw in the American conquest of the West a model for Germany's conquest of the East to achieve her divine right of "Lebensraum" there. In *Mein Kampf*, Hitler sees the American expansion into the West as an expression of white Anglo-Saxon Germanic racial superiority" (Donnelly 2012). In Germany, this fascination with North American Indigenous peoples continues today, as it did when I arrived in Osnabrück, Germany. It was the second to last day of the field school where students had the

opportunity to wander about the city; and it was here that I ran into a fellow dressed like an Indigenous person. I approached the stand where nobody was willing to acknowledge or help me.

Indeed I had a few questions about the regalia and nature of their business. As I approached the man, he walked in the opposite direction trying to avoid me. Not wanting to make a scene, I decided not to pursue the issue any further; instead, I walked away, feeling saddened that there could be no respectful dialogue. While Hayden Taylor had mixed feelings when asking whether it is “appreciation or appropriation,” I, unlike Taylor, am *not* conflicted. If it were appreciation, there would be no appropriation; I personally take offense and find this kind of behaviour hurtful. In fact, I would add that this infatuation contributes to the ongoing dehumanizing experiences of Indigenous peoples today. This type of entertainment and hobby-ism comes at the expense of the dignity of Indigenous peoples, and it perpetuates ignorance, particularly the struggle for Indigenous self-determination.

Understanding Indigenous Peoples

As Canada is in a time of reconciliation, it is imperative that people make an effort to understand who Indigenous peoples are, particularly beyond the stereotypical “they’re lazy, bums, uneducated alcoholics.” Therefore, I spend a great deal of time helping to connect with and create ways of understanding Indigenous peoples, self-determination, and colonialism. In Canada there are multiple terms in use to describe Indigenous peoples, which include First Nations (those who have ‘Indian Status’), Métis or mixed blood (usually Cree and French), and Inuit. However, the Métis and Inuit do NOT have Indian Status like First Nations people do; the Indian Act determines Indian status. Statistics Canada has determined that there are 634 Indigenous nations that make up Canada, which is about five percent of the overall population.

Each Indigenous nation respectively has its particular worldviews, languages, and customs that are uniquely theirs while belonging to a specific land base. Indigenous peoples currently occupy 2% of the entire land base in Canada, which includes “Indian Reserves” and treaty settlement lands. It should be noted that I do not speak or represent all Indigenous peoples or nations. What I do offer comes

firstly from NCN family cultural teachings, and secondly from Western post-secondary education.

Indigenous self-determination in Canada is widely misunderstood to have direct correlation with federal government agreements, such as treaties, both historical and modern day. These agreements are also interpreted differently by the federal government and by Indigenous peoples. In *Whose Land Is It Anyway? A Manual for Decolonization* (2017), Venne emphasizes this point:

Most Canadians assume that somehow Canada acquired formal title to this land 150 years ago in the *British North American Act*, the country's founding document. That this is not the case is clearly reflected in the fact that Canada is still desperately negotiating with hundreds of First Nations to have them surrender, once and for all, their title to the lands given to us by the Creator. (15)

This is problematic, particularly for Indigenous peoples who maintain their identity and responsibilities to *hišuk?išcawak* (everyone is one and connected) because this understanding does not allow for the surrender of Indigenous rights. Further, it should be noted that Indigenous self-determination varies from nation to nation, and it is not my place to discuss the self-determination of other nations. I speak *only* to what I know and that is a NCN perspective and understanding of *?uu?uuq"aačii* (self-independence). A NCN worldview is connected to the natural world, which includes all life forms created.

NCN scholar Richard Atleo or Umeek (2004) elaborates on this, bringing attention to the unity of the physical and spiritual worlds. He notes that, as NCN, we did not make a distinction between the spiritual and physical realms. He states that “unlike the contemporary division between the two, the NCN saw the physical world as a manifestation of the spiritual world” (10). The NCN worldview has been interrupted by colonialism, but never brought to cultural extinction. With the guidance of loved ones and NCN literature, we can better understand *?uu?uuq"aačii*.

Given the limitations of this chapter and the broadness of *?uu?uuq"aačii*, I am going to focus on three important aspects of *?uu?uuq"aačii*: the first is what it means to be *quu?as-sa* (an NCN human being); the second is the relationships to the natural world; and the third

is our [NCN] inherent responsibilities to *hišuk?išcawak* (everyone is one and connected).

The book, *The Sayings of Our First Peoples* (Keitlah 1995) is guided by NCN elders who place emphasis on being *quu?as-sa* and being proud of who you are; and also on self-respect and respect for others (20). Umeek (2004) also stresses respect, but in relation to love, stating it was “the core and heart of the Nuu-chah-nulth way” (15). To be a good, kind, loving human being is what being *quu?as-sa* also means. We come to understand who we are as NCN, as *quu?as-sa*, from family cultural teachings, which, for me, derive from *činxint* and *?iihatisath*. How we as NCN come to understand ourselves is linked to nature, and as such we acknowledge ourselves in relation to *hišuk?išcawak*, which includes (but is not limited to) the sun, sky, moon, stars, land, mountain, waters (lake, ocean, river, and stream).

The light connects us to *naas*, or the creator, and the moon prepares us for what we seek in terms of knowledge. Our navigation tools are the stars and sky, connecting us to our ancestors and the great beyond; the mountains aid life (water, trees, animals, plants) while the oceans connect us to the tides and help us prepare (i.e., for the whale hunt). With great rain come strong winds, and together they can create rainbows. The earthquake is also our strongest relative who shakes it up to remind us not to get distracted by that which does not value our NCN teachings of love, kindness, humility, respect, and generosity. As *quu?as-sa*, our worldview is alive today in the minds and hearts of our people who consciously embody family cultural teachings, and the sacred responsibility of becoming a good ancestor. To understand *?uu?uuq?aačii* requires much attention and a commitment to learning; it is layered and complex. *?uu?uuq?aačii* can obviously not be captured in one section of one chapter.

Reconciliation?

Canada has and will continue to face political, social, economic, and spiritual opposition from Indigenous peoples, particularly on issues of self-determination and reconciliation. This troubled relationship is crippled by the outdated *Indian Act*, which was established prior to confederation and continues to be a source of great contention. It is the piece of legislation that has stripped Indigenous peoples of their

inherent rights and responsibilities to *hišuk?išcawak* (everything that is one and connected). Under the *Act*, Indigenous peoples are considered “wards of the state,” unable to care for themselves and in need of state intervention. Section 2.1 of the *Act* determines who is ‘Indian’ and who is not, undermining Indigenous forms of governance. And the *Act* continues to dictate and control the day-to-day affairs of Indigenous peoples to this day.

In *Whose Land Is It Anyways? A Manual for Decolonization* (2017), Diabo notes that the initial intent of the *Act* was to eliminate what is commonly referred to as the “Indian problem” (2017, 23). Indigenous peoples stood in the way of the civilized settlement of Canada and were expected to assimilate, or die off. In the 1870s, the *Act* also established Indian Residential Schools (IRS) where young children were separated from their parents, siblings, grandparents, and community and sent away to school. IRS were federally funded and operated by various church denominations with the stated purpose to “kill the Indian in the child” in an effort to integrate Indigenous peoples into the dominant society (Facing History and Ourselves). Both of my late parents as well as many other family members, including my grandmother, were survivors of IRS. Only recently has Gran begun to share intimate details of her residential school experiences, where she recalled either being fed moldy bread or going hungry (personal communication, 15 March 2014).

Sadly, thousands of Indigenous children were abused sexually, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually while simultaneously being neglected. The last school in Canada closed in 1996. Decades later, survivors began to come forward to share their stories and also to file lawsuits against Canada. This was followed by the implementation of the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement, which managed all the cases. Further, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada on Indian Residential Schools (TRC) was established in June 2008. Over the next six years, the TRC commissioners travelled across the country to hear the first-hand testimony of IRS survivors. I attended the 2012 TRC event in Vancouver, British Columbia, where I had mixed feelings about the process, as did others, but I respected the fact that many IRS survivors found comfort in it.

The event felt like a circus with thousands of people in attendance, and with public survivor testimony, cultural ceremonies, food services, and various other vendors. I intentionally remained open to the process and tried not to be critical; and I tried to be mindful of the fact that this was not about me. I closely followed the TRC until the final report and

recommendations were released in June 2015. In, *A Knock on the Door: The Essential History of Residential Schools from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada* (2016), the TRC states “the establishment and operations of residential schools were a central element of this policy, which can best be described as ‘cultural genocide’” (3). Further, the TRC put forward 94 Calls-to-Action that can only be described as ambitious. The Calls-to-Action ask provincial, federal, and territorial governments to consider revamping existing Child Welfare systems while noting the role education plays in teaching history and, more importantly, in processes of reconciliation (163).

The Calls-to-Action also include components of culture and language revitalization, health and justice issues, and more. Governments and educational institutions tout the report and reconciliation as the solution to the many issues that face both Indigenous communities/nations/peoples and other Canadians. It is now 2018, and the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation’s Indigenous series recently published *Beyond 94: Where is Canada at with Reconciliation?*, noting that 10 of the 94 Calls-to-Action have been completed. The TRC’s instruction guide supports a number of groups, such as local communities, various governments and faith organizations; *Beyond 94* monitors the groups and reports back on the action items being met.

On February 14, 2018, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau announced a commitment to work with Indigenous peoples to develop “a Recognition and Implementation of Rights Framework.” Further, the federal government’s announcement noted:

The Framework can also include new measures to support the rebuilding of Indigenous nations and governments, and advance Indigenous self-determination, including the inherent right of self-government....

Through this Framework, we will lay the foundation for real and lasting change on issues that matter most to people, including eliminating long-term boil water advisories, improving primary and secondary education on reserve, and taking further steps toward reconciliation. (Trudeau 2018)

The promised Framework certainly speaks to recognizing Indigenous nationhood and the inherent right to self-determination/government. Further, Trudeau highlights the federal

government's commitment to address long-standing and critical matters related to drinking water and education while moving towards reconciliation. These major political commitments should leave Indigenous peoples, like me, feeling hopeful, but they do not.

There is no doubt that in Canada, along with other governments (municipal, provincial, etc.), Indigenous peoples, local communities, and others are embracing the Calls-to-Action while making strides to improve the relationship with Indigenous peoples. However, I am inclined to agree with CBC's Shelagh Rogers (broadcast/journalist) who stated that in Canada we have unfortunately jumped right from the TRC report to reconciliation, missing what is in the middle — justice and healing (Rogers 2018). As for healing, Canada's genocidal history with Indigenous peoples and residential schools is horrific and ugly, and it will require time to heal.

The justice aspect requires time as well, but what is also required is a deeper understanding of Indigenous people's current reality and the continued struggle for self-determination, which often lacks context. Instead, stereotypes of Indigenous peoples as lazy, alcoholic, and looking for a handout add an additional layer to the ongoing struggle for self-determination. Little is known about Indigenous peoples' worldviews and self-determination; therefore, ignorance continues to prevail, particularly during a time of reconciliation. What most Canadians do not know is that Indigenous peoples make up almost five per cent of the population, and that they have the highest rates of suicides, incarcerations, and child welfare apprehension. Decades of marginalizing Indigenous women means that they are vulnerable and that they are likely to encounter violence and poverty, to go missing, and even to be murdered. In *Whose Land Is It Anyway?: A Manual for Decolonization* (2017), Laboucan-Massimo adds that Indigenous women are five times more likely to die from violence than their non-Indigenous counterparts (39).

Most Indigenous peoples remain wards of the state, living under the *Indian Act* and landless in their own territories. The right to Indigenous self-determination has been an ongoing battle, and is now clouded by Canada's vision of *reconciliation*, the new government buzzword. Once again, Canada has gotten ahead of itself, skipping the truth and jumping to reconciliation while negating the persistence of *colonialism*. Laboucan-Massimo notes that "[t]he values of colonialism exist in the form of capitalism," adding that these "colonial values of domination are embedded in patriarchy" (39). Barker and Battell Lowman (2015) argue that colonialism is part of Canada's identity, yet so misunderstood

(24). In addition to understanding Indigenous peoples, it is equally important to try to understand colonialism in the present-day context, especially in an effort to reconcile and dismantle colonialism. On the surface it appears as though Canada is leading the way toward reconciliation with Indigenous peoples. But once you get beyond the rhetoric of reconciliation and begin to unpack the layers of history and current Indigenous reality, you may become unsettled (Regan 2010). However, it is a starting point.

Conclusion

The I-witness Holocaust Field School experience changed my life while providing me with a safe space to learn about hatred, racism, and intolerance. This experience gave me the confidence to go forward with the truth about NCN experiences of genocide and to name colonialism as it exists in its current form today. Adam Barker and Emma Battell Lowman (2015) state that “colonialism more than any other force drove the creation and shape of Canada, and that it continues into the present” (24). Colonialism is largely responsible for the destruction of *?uu?uuq“aačii*, which impacts NCN understandings of being *quu?as-sa*. It is clear that more needs to be done to educate and to create respectful dialogues, ones that cross cultures and differences while attempting to confront issues of racism, intolerance, and hatred. Like others before me, what I have learned is that, as humans, we are more alike than different, and there is more to be gained by working together than apart.

Genocide is genocide; it knows neither race nor bounds. Further, relying on governments and other organizations to address reconciliation is both unfair and unrealistic. Where does this leave us, as people who share this land called Canada? It leaves us with the responsibility, but also the opportunity, to get to know one another and create lasting, respectful relationships with one another, and to the land. Like Senator Murray Sinclair of the TRC, I believe that education is the key (see Anderson 2018) not only to reconciliation, but also to building an understanding of who we are as human beings.

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