

Ghosts of Another World:  
Voices from the non-Indigenous descendants of former Canadian residential school staff  
by

Kimberly Haiste  
BA, Trinity Western University, 2008

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree of  
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Based on Prime Minister Harper's 2008 Apology for the Indian Residential School (IRS) system, this thesis addresses the need to confront the intergenerational legacy of this system on non-Indigenous Canadians in order to challenge our ability to actually 'journey together' with Indigenous Survivors. Aiming to break the silence that has surrounded this legacy, the voices of non-Indigenous descendants of former staff, as well as my own as a non-Indigenous Canadian, expose personal experiences of the lived reality of the IRS legacy.

Working from a narrative methodology from within a decolonizing framework, this research includes interviews with two descendants of former staff, as well as an auto-ethnography of myself, as researcher, to capture the lived experiences with relation to this legacy. Results from this introductory work illustrate a variety of themes needing to be acknowledged, and deals with notions of opening dialogue, violence, guilt and responsibility within the context of the IRS system.

**Key Words:** *Indian Residential Schools, Colonialism, Non-Indigenous Canadians, Intergenerational Legacy,*

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## **Dedication**

I dedicate this work to my brother, for whom I learned all that I know in resiliency, challenging the status quo, and having the strength and perseverance to live in difficult and uncomfortable spaces. Although your life was cut short, you taught me to fight, to love and how to recognize what is truly important. Throughout this process, I have felt your spirit within me, and so I dedicate its completion to you.

Reader Warning: The following material discusses personal experiences around residential schools and depicts issues of abuse, neglect, racism, shame etc. As such, it may be triggering for the reader.

*We live on a restless planet that is in a constant state of creation and destruction. A planet covered in countries with diseased souls who have forgotten they know the most important ingredient of the medicine needed to heal: Truth. (Moore, 2006:xi)*

*As I listened to all the people, I was forced to look at myself again and again, and I came to understand fuller how the pervasive silence of our childhood still affects us today, that it is our legacy to be evasive. And that's the hard part to accept, to get beyond, because that legacy has become a tool of preservation. (Hegi, 1997:302)*

*You who will emerge from the flood  
In which we have gone under  
Bring to mind  
When you speak of our failings  
Bring to mind also the dark times  
That you have escaped.*

(Taken from “To Those Born Later” by Brecht, 1938 as seen in Willet & Manheim (ED) 1976, 1979:318)

## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

The legacy of Indian Residential Schools has contributed to social problems that continue to exist in many communities today. It has taken extraordinary courage for the thousands of survivors that have come forward to speak publicly about the abuse they suffered...The burden of this experience has been on your shoulders for too long. The burden is properly ours as a Government and as a country. There is no place in Canada for the attitudes that inspired the Indian Residential Schools system ever to prevail again. You have been working on recovering from this experience for a long time and in a very real sense, we are now joining you on this journey. (Prime Minister Stephen Harper Apology, 2008)

Prime Minister Stephen Harper spoke these words during his Apology to Indian Residential School (IRS) Survivors in the Canadian House of Commons in June 2008. In his address, Harper proposed that the ‘burden’ of the Residential School legacy must be shared by both the Government and Canadians. It has been close to five years since these words were spoken, yet it is here that two very crucial questions continue to exist for today’s Canadian society: what and whose attitudes is he referring to, and more importantly, what is this ‘burden’ and the needed ‘recovery’ that is ‘properly ours’ as a country?

Increasingly research has looked at the roots of colonization, colonial mentalities still present in today’s Canadian society, and the role of such mentalities in Canada’s governmental policy of the Residential School System (Regan, 2010, Milloy, 1999; Miller, 1996; Barker, 2006). The words of Harper’s apology came out of the largest class action settlement in Canadian history between residential school Survivors, the Churches, and the Government. This settlement birthed Canada’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) in order to attempt to document the IRS history, educate Canadians, and to promote recovery between Indigenous<sup>1</sup> and non-Indigenous peoples from the years of violence. This being said, it can be seen that many non-Indigenous Canadians still have very little knowledge and even less of a sense of connection to this colonial history and the residential school era (Environics Institute, 2010: 5). In a recent

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<sup>1</sup> For the purposes of this thesis the term Indigenous is used to denote First Nations, Métis, and Inuit in Canada.

study, non-Indigenous Canadians gave “Canadian schools a failing grade when it came to educating the population at large about Aboriginal history, culture and experience (Environics Institute, 2010:5). It is here that such lack of knowledge begs the question whether or not we as Canadians are actually able to ‘join on this journey’ with IRS survivors. I believe this lack of knowledge and awareness prompts some important questions that need to be answered before we can honestly begin to confront the burden that is properly ours as a country; what is the lasting legacy left by the historic attitudes and actions of the IRS policy on the present Settler<sup>2</sup> Canadian generation, and then, how do we, as Settlers, begin to recover from this legacy in order to truly ‘join on this journey’? In order to attempt to tackle such complex questions within this thesis, it became imperative to narrow the scope of the ‘Settler Canadian generation’ to a particular focus. Currently one voice that is missing within the IRS legacy dialogue is that of Settler descendants of former IRS staff. As some of the closest bystanders to this history, I believe the experiences of such a group can provide a deepened and important understanding of the Settler legacy within Canada.

As a Settler Canadian, it took me living abroad in a community where I clearly recognized the impacts of colonialism<sup>3</sup>, to connect my own identity and certain attitudes as ‘colonizer’ in Canada. I began to recognize this unspoken legacy of history that permeated me, often outside my own consciousness. It was during my work with Canada’s Truth and Reconciliation

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<sup>2</sup> For the purposes of this paper the term ‘Settler’ will be used to denote all non-Indigenous Canadians. It is important to note the controversy surrounding this term, however due to the limitations in this study, the controversy will not be highlighted here. For more information on the term ‘Settler’ please see Adam Barker’s (2006) “Being Colonial: Colonial mentalities in Canadian Settler society and political theory”

<sup>3</sup> Due to restraints of length involved in this work, colonialism and its history in Canada will not be included at length. For purposes of this work colonialism refers to “a form of imperialism that is based on maintaining a sharp distinction between the ruling power and the colonial (exploited) populations. Unequal rights are a fundamental feature of colonialism, as is the imposition of a dominant culture’s values and practices on that of a subordinate group” (Dumbrill, et al. 2007:6). For an in-depth discussion of colonialism and its effects, please see Ray, 1996; Memmi, 1965; Barker, 2006.

Commission that I more deeply began to question the Canadian ‘silence’ in the wake of a century of the Indian Residential School policy. Harper acknowledged, although somewhat vaguely, the attitudes present in the IRS system. I began to wonder where such attitudes ‘disappeared’ to after the expulsion of the system. In the light of the great Canadian void of education surrounding the IRS history, I questioned if we as Canadians are unaware of the IRS legacy on Indigenous Survivors and their communities, how much less are we aware of our own connection to this legacy?

Paulette Regan and Adam Barker are two Settlers who have attempted to wrestle with many of these questions. In her work, *Unsettling the Settler Within*, Regan (2010) conveys the ‘Settler identity’ in light of Canada’s colonial presence. This work also speaks of perpetrator/bystander guilt and denial, and ‘historical amnesia’, as pieces to understanding the IRS Settler burden and recovery (Regan 2010). Barker (2006) outlines the colonial mentalities present within many Settlers today. My work here attempts to further deepen our understanding of the IRS Settler legacy, attempting to add voice to the questions posed above. Building from Regan’s (2010) notion of ‘historical amnesia’ as colonizers ‘pathologizing the colonized’, I ask what are the experiences of the residential school policy on Settler Canadians, specifically former IRS staff family members. It is hoped that the answer to this question will help to provide a ground from which to build honest relations between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples in Canada; that as Settler Canadians, we can begin to honestly ‘journey together’ in a way that promotes greatly needed recovery.

Some may question the importance of this work. The last residential school in Canada closed in 1996 and it would seem for many that peace exists within Canada now that this abusive IRS system is in the past. This work attempts to provide an important linkage previously broken

from our Settler past to the present realities. Within issues of colonialism, specific to the IRS legacy, notions of peace within Canada become important to understand. In a survey done in 2008, it was found most likely for Canadians to believe that relations between Aboriginal and non-Aborigines in Canada were improving, while Aboriginals were the least likely to believe relations were improving (Environics Research Group, 2008: i). Such a contrast in beliefs has been highlighted in the current “Idle No More” movement that has recently swept the country. According to a recent study looking at the experiences of urban Aboriginal people in Canada, “the majority of Aboriginals reported that they personally experienced unfair or negative treatment because of who they are” (UAPS, 2010: 4). There is thus a disturbing disconnect between the perceptions of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples about this relationship.

Galtung’s (1964) differentiation between positive and negative peace (as seen in Anderson, 2004) can illustrate the continued harm and potential escalation of conflict that awaits Canada if the current presence of the IRS history is left unexamined. Within conflict theory, ‘negative peace’ is understood as the absence of direct violence or war, though indirect violence, such as attitudes and policies, persist (Anderson, 2004). In this sense, peace appears to exist, but a closer examination reveals underlying conflict waiting to erupt.

The Residential School System was more than physical abuse and direct violence. At its core was deeply entrenched systemic or indirect violence of colonial attitudes and policies and in this sense until one addresses the underlying roots of the indirect violence of the behaviours, attitudes and actions, the peace that seemingly exists will remain merely a smoke screen (Anderson, 2004); that is, the recovery for all that Harper seems to imply may be extremely difficult to obtain. Unless a society works to address the indirect structural violence of attitudes and actions, impending conflict can remain smouldering beneath the surface, waiting to erupt

into a new form of direct violence (Anderson, 2004). In the case of Canada, we can see then that the IRS legacy and the impacts of the IRS system permeate society, whether acknowledged or not. Understanding notions of negative and positive peace within the context of Canada's Residential School System and the broader colonial theme can illustrate the deepening need for examining the attitudes and 'burden' left in the wake of this policy.

With the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, the Indian Residential School Settlement Agreement, the TRC, as well as various other research, there is now a growing recognition of the need for addressing the lack of Settler connection to our colonial history. This being said, some are beginning to acknowledge the silence that has permeated our society and the importance of promoting education and awareness surrounding this history. Recently, VanCity (2012), in partnership with Reconciliation Canada<sup>4</sup>, announced that it will be funding an initiative to promote dialogue and educate Canadians about the IRS legacy. This initiative was born out of an organization called Reconciliation Canada with the mandate to "educate the public about the legacy of Canada's Indian Residential School system, connect communities in British Columbia and promote reconciliation through community-based outreach programs and events" (Vancity, 2012). Such initiatives are hoping to set the groundwork for the upcoming TRC British Columbia National Event happening in Vancouver in 2013.

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<sup>4</sup> Reconciliation Canada is a non-profit initiative in partnership with Tides Canada Initiatives Society (TCI) and the Indian Residential Schools Survivors Society (IRSSS) and aims to "create opportunity for Canadians, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal alike, to learn about the impacts of residential schooling, heal together by sharing knowledge and experience, and develop strategies for moving forward in a mutually positive manner" (Reconciliation Canada, 2012). It is different from Canada's TRC in that Reconciliation Canada's focus is on British Columbia, and unlike the TRC, it was not birthed out of a court settlement agreement, but rather the vision of an IRS Survivor. Reconciliation Canada works in support of Canada's TRC.

In light of Canada's legacy of silence, Regan posed the troubling question about how it is that many Canadians have continued to live unaware of such histories despite the large scale effects visibly seen on Indigenous communities:

How is it that we know nothing about this [Residential School] history? What does the persistence of such invisibility in the face of the living presence of survivors tell us about our relationship with Indigenous peoples? What does our historical amnesia reveal about our continuing complicity in denying, erasing, and forgetting this part of our own history as colonizers while pathologizing the colonized? (Regan, 2010:6)

Although work is attempting to be done to capture the IRS legacy impacts on Indigenous communities, even less is currently understood about the consequences of the IRS policy on Settler Canadians, including the impact given the years of silence of this legacy. Canada's TRC was tasked with attempting to examine the history and rationale of the residential school system and to educate all about its legacy. It remains to be seen as to the ability of the TRC to achieve such an overwhelming task, especially in light of the political issues surrounding the organization. Most recently the TRC took the Canadian Government back to court around the accessibility of historical IRS documents.<sup>5</sup> The court found that the Government of Canada is required to produce all relevant documents to the Commission. It is situations like this, with the need to take the Government of Canada to court, which continues to only reinforce skepticism around Harper's Apology. The lack of accessibility to IRS government records threatened to further re-enforce the societal silence, or what is understood by Regan (2010) as 'historic amnesia', or in this case a systemic 'historic amnesia'. The work in this thesis, then, is an attempt to break this silence, to bring the Canadian voice to the surface in recognition of our shared IRS legacy; however difficult it might be.

Attempts to understand the importance of the legacy left in the wake of the IRS system must first distinguish between the burden and impact of the IRS policy found in Indigenous

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<sup>5</sup> Please see Fontaine v. Canada (Attorney General), 2013.

Survivors and community, and that of the burden on Settler Canadians. In light of the desire to respect and honour the Indigenous experiences of this very real IRS legacy, I have struggled to use the word ‘burden’ to capture the IRS legacy experience of Settler Canadians. In many ways, it is possible to physically see the legacy of the IRS policy on intergenerational IRS Survivors and their family and community members:

Indigenous peoples in Canada suffer from overwhelming levels of disease, starvation, alcoholism, and any other indicator that can track poverty, as well as racist treatment from individuals, courts, governments, and corporate interests. These issues are widely written about, and reported on, in scholarly circles as well as in popular media. However, colonial Settlers do not recognize or acknowledge their own roles in colonial practices that not only continue into the present, but pervade our own lives. (Barker, 2010:319)

In light of such overwhelming disparities, and the detrimental impacts of residential school legacy work done to capture the Indigenous burden and intergenerational experience convey themes of resistance, resilience and great strength in moving forward from such a policy (Qwul'sih'yah'maht, 2000). One such survivor of the Kuper Island IRS spoke to both his experience of the IRS policy and colonialism, as well as to the legacy he saw continuing into today’s Canadian generations:

It has been an extraordinary life that I have lived—without a shadow of a doubt. I am indeed a survivor of a holocaust equal to the Jewish holocaust. The only difference is we were not murdered. To live was worse than death. We did not know who we were in terms of identity...My final emphasis concerning the long-term effects of the Department of Indian Affairs is this, I say that racism is alive and well in Canada. Canada professes to be a humane society, the best in the world, and advocates that often. I say they are hypocrites... (Qwul'sih'yah'maht, 2000:115)

To be clear, the term ‘Settler burden’ is not meant to imply any sort of comparison to IRS Survivors, their families or communities. No comparison can and ever should be made with regards to the oppressive and genocidal treatment of Indigenous people of this land and the subsequent intergenerational effects now being felt. Rather, the term Settler burden is used to capture the wake of the unacknowledged and oppressive attitudes present in the system, to admit that as Settlers, we too have a needed recovery from the IRS legacy. As Settler Canadians, we

still continue to live comfortably unaware of the ways in which those attitudes and actions present within the IRS system, might be burdening us with our colonial mentalities and ignorance (Barker, 2006; Regan; 2010). Inter-generationally, many of us as Settlers are unaware of the way we continue to be benefactors of our violent colonial presence, living and benefitting on land taken from Indigenous territory<sup>6</sup>. No doubt hard to swallow, notions of ‘sickness’ with relation to colonial violence have begun to further problematize our Settler benevolent identity (Chrisjohn and Young, 1997). In an attempt to parody the pathologizing of Aboriginal people (as mentioned by Regan, 2010), Chrisjohn and Young (1997) flip the newly coined mental health term ‘Residential School Syndrome’, currently used to indicate the detrimental health legacy that many Indigenous people suffer, to provoke the question of ‘sickness’ specific to non-Aboriginal people in Canada:

Like a lot of comedy, this parody has its roots in reality: that it is not the Aboriginal Peoples who are sick, but the society that, among other things, created the Residential Schools. The inability to face up to that fact, for whatever reasons, is a festering wound that bears dealing with. (Chrisjohn and Young, 1997: 104)

As challenging as Chrisjohn and Young’s depiction is, it seems extremely naïve to believe that such a systemically oppressive policy as in the IRS system, would have no ill-implications on those who designed, operated, and ultimately supported its existence, or the generations succeeding it. This work, then, is in an attempt to acknowledge this legacy and rightfully place

<sup>6</sup> Issues surrounding land claims and treaties continue to be of great debate and due to limitations in the length of this paper they will not be explored here. It is important, however, to note that in many cases it has been found that often the policy goal of the Government surrounding land title has been to attempt to “extinguish Aboriginal title and facilitate the exploitation of the natural resources on or under those lands (Alfred, 2009:28) rather than to promote the nation to nation agreement many Indigenous leaders had originally agreed to. “All land claims in Canada, including those at issue in the BC treaty process, arise from the mistaken premise that Canada owns the land it is situated on. In fact, where Indigenous people have not surrendered the ownership, legal title to “Crown” land does not exist- it is a fiction of Canadian (colonial) law. To assert the validity of Crown title to land that the indigenous population has not surrendered by treaty is to accept the racist assumptions of earlier centuries, when European interests were automatically given priority over the rights of supposedly “uncivilized” indigenous peoples” (Alfred, 2009: 144). In this case, many Canadians continue to live on land and access all its privileges, while in many cases Indigenous peoples live in poverty on reserve land.

the burden where it exists towards a healthier future for all, Indigenous and non-Indigenous. It aims to open further dialogical space around Settler Canadians calling us to recognize our responsibility and connection to this legacy in order to support Indigenous healing, and livelihood, as well as our own recovery; to ultimately walk towards better relations wherever possible. Regan clarifies the notion of the burden on Settlers, highlighting the key question:

How can we, as non-Indigenous people, unsettle ourselves to name and transform the settler – the colonizer who lurks within – not just in words but by our actions, as we confront the history of colonization, violence, racism, and injustice that remains part of the IRS legacy today? To me, this is the crux of the matter (Regan, 2010:11).

. I come to this work having had the opportunity to both intern and work in a student capacity with the TRC research directorate. As mentioned, it was here that questions surrounding this thesis arose as I would often see attempts being made to better understand the Indigenous intergenerational IRS legacy, in parallel with a continued ‘silence’ that seemed to exist among Settler Canadians around me. Building from scholars such as Regan (2010) and Qwul’sih’yah’mah (2005), I began to more deeply question how the IRS legacy was being felt within myself as a Settler, and a generational Canadian of this policy. Even more so I more deeply questioned how such a legacy was being experienced by the broader Settler community.

...Delmar Johnnie, once said that it is such a shame that every time someone who went to residential school dies without telling his or her stories, our government and the churches look more innocent. Telling these stories is a form of resistance to colonization...I believe that storytelling respects and honours people while simultaneously documenting their reality (Qwul’sih’yah’mah (Robina Thomas), 2005, 241-242, 244).

Although the stress of this quote is for the greatly needed time and space for IRS Survivors to confront the colonial violence in their communities, it has become clear that the ‘amnesia’ within the Settler-Canadian perpetrator/bystander story of this legacy also contributes to allow the historic image of “Settler benevolence” (Regan, 2010) or ‘innocence’ to go unchallenged. As in other ‘colonized’ lands, the issue of silence and denial are seen to take effect:

The politics of denial was (and in many ways continues to be) one of the most pernicious dimensions of colonial injustices and is a significant barrier to actualizing justice. Injustices

against Maori have been perpetuated through the subtle culture of denial that prevails in New Zealand society. Denial includes various ways that people block, shut out, repress, or cover up certain forms of disturbing information or otherwise evade, avoid, or neutralize the implications of this information. (Joseph, as seen in McCaslin, 2005:255)

I have heard many Settlers offer that while the IRS legacy is a sad chapter for Indigenous people, they themselves do not feel a deep understanding or connection with this legacy. Such feelings illustrate the important complications surrounding notions of what is understood as the bystander identity<sup>7</sup>, or those who were somewhat removed from the harms that occurred. Questions began to come to me as to why as a Settler, I so quickly desire to detach from this history as if it were not my own.

To date, there exists little literature surrounding experiences of non-Indigenous family members or specifically descendants of former IRS staff, especially in light of the current shifting politicization of the broader colonial project. Again, Regan speaks to this lack of connection for Settlers in her work as a piece of our colonial legacy:

To my mind, Canadians are still on a misguided, obsessive, and mythical quest to assuage colonizer guilt by solving the Indian problem. In this way, we avoid looking too closely at ourselves and the collective responsibility we bear for the colonial status quo. The significant challenge that lies before us is to turn the mirror back upon ourselves and to answer the provocative question posed by historian Roger Epp regarding reconciliation in Canada: How do we solve the settler problem? (Regan, 2010:11)

The work here then, is a way of attempting to turn the mirror back onto ourselves as Settler Canadians, to more deeply understand what actually is meant by the ‘settler problem’ specific to the IRS legacy in order to no longer ‘pathologize the colonized’ (Regan, 2010).

<sup>7</sup> Notions of ‘bystander’ are deeply complex with regards to being a Settler in Canada. In the case of the IRS system, a bystander would denote the people who were not directly involved in the actual harms of the system. However, from a collective standpoint, in many ways we as a country continue to perpetuate harm to Indigenous communities as benefactors of our privilege. In light of this complexity, I found it quite challenging to bring in studies looking at bystanders being that it was difficult to situate such clear identifying boundaries as to who can and should be considered a ‘bystander’. Jasper’s ()categorization of levels of guilt and responsibility become helpful in this struggle. Although extremely important to consider, due to the restrictions of length in this thesis, I will not provide a detailed discussion around this topic. For the purposes of this thesis, I have situated the term ‘bystander’ specifically within the realm of the IRS history and use it to denote all those who were not directly involved with running the schools.

Through my own personal and work experiences, as well as my conflict studies, I have come to see the role that narrative truth-telling can offer in recovering from areas of conflict and systemic abuse. Many shifts in my own understanding have occurred when I have been asked to reflect on various experiences in relation to my colonial history. Leading conflict theorist, John Paul Lederach, speaks to the importance of individual/collective narrative and memory on society and the harm that can occur in the face of what he conveys as broken narratives:

When deep narrative is broken, the journey toward the past that lies before us is marginalized, truncated. We lose more than just the thoughts of a few old people. We lose our bearings. We lose the capacity to find our place in this world. And we lose the capacity to find our way back to humanity (Lederach, 2005:147).

Lederach's words were said from within the issues that have arisen around the broken narratives in many Indigenous communities; however, it is critical to understand how the deeply broken Settler narrative, due to silence, has in many ways also contributed to a Settler loss of humanity. With this break in our understanding, I propose that we as Settlers have lost a part of ourselves, often without our perceiving it; we are disconnected to a piece of our identity that remains living within us, outside our recognition. In this sense, we live in a way, cut off from ourselves.

Dehumanization in the face of structural oppression and violence does not just exist for those oppressed; it exists for those who are oppressors as well (Freire, 1993). Just as there are deeply imbedded implications of the break in narrative for Indigenous communities, there must be deeply imbedded implications of the break in narrative for Settlers. Attempting to capture the connection for those closest to the history—non-Indigenous descendants of former IRS staff—may contribute to beginning the humanizing process of ourselves as Settler Canadians; to join with Indigenous peoples on recovering from the IRS legacy. The work in this thesis is an attempt at opening this dialogue; of coming to the table to confront those dark places that are difficult to go to.

Setting the tone, the scope of this work is limited to specifically the Settler families and or relatives of those who were directly involved with the IRS system in hopes of better understanding how they, themselves, are experiencing its legacy. I have attempted to capture the experiences of the IRS legacy through a narrative process with specifically two descendants, Dr. Victoria Freeman, and Michael<sup>8</sup>.

Michael, a man in his adult years, came forward to me after hearing the subject of my work. His mom had worked for a residential school in the 1960s, prior to getting married and having children and he came to the process very aware of many of the issues I was looking at. Dr. Freeman, is a well-known and respected author, activist, and academic. In her book *Distant Relations: How My Ancestors Colonized North America* (2000), Freeman was one of the first Settlers to publically discuss her journey into understanding how her family has been involved in the colonizing of North America, including her grandfather's work with an IRS. In her work she discusses the difficulty in attempting to give voice to such a legacy:

I grew up thinking of my grandfather as someone who had been friendly, respectful, and helpful to aboriginal people, someone who cared about their situation and who was culturally sensitive; in fact, he was a role model. So when I first begun hearing and reading about the horrors of residential schools and when rereading my grandfather's unpublished memoirs I came across his account of his involvement with the Cecilia Jeffrey Indian Residential School at Shoal Lake, Ontario, I was surprised and perplexed. How could someone whom I knew had been an exemplary person have been associated with one of these schools, which are now almost universally condemned for their legacy of suffering? The two pieces didn't fit together, and yet I knew that somehow they must- that for all the potential exaggeration in the media reports of the schools' destructive effects on aboriginal culture and individuals, there was a basic truth in the criticism of the schools, and for all my grandfather's personal virtues and committed work for social justice, he must have indeed become part of an oppressive system. I needed to understand the nature of his involvement. (Freeman, 2000:356)

Similar to Regan (2010), Freeman is another scholar who has highlighted our disconnection as Settlers and her understanding of the Settler amnesia phenomenon in the presence of our colonial past:

<sup>8</sup> Name change to protect anonymity.

At the same time, I began to notice that many people I knew who were English, Irish, or Scottish decent like me talked as if they had no connection to their own history. It seemed that most of us were ignorant about how and why our families ended up on this continent. We knew nothing of our ancestors' struggles overseas (for example, the Highland clearances), although such experiences certainly shaped our forebears and made us who we are today. I was struck by the amnesia of each generation: our family memories often went back only as far as our grandparents. They marked the vanishing point of remembered ancestry for most of us-our great-grandparents fell off the edge of the world...I have come to realize how much immigrants lose of their family memory because it is tied to physical places-to houses, farms, towns, landmarks, battlefields, and graves. (Freeman, 2000:xvii)

Resonating with such words, this thesis, working from a narrative methodology within a decolonizing framework, attempts to capture the experiences of two descendants of former IRS staff, as well as my own self-ethnography experiences in an honest attempt to answer the question: what is the lasting legacy left by the historic attitudes and actions of the IRS policy, specific to descendants of former IRS staff. This work is an attempt to bring the voices to the IRS dialogue in a way that confronts the Settler silence which has prolonged the IRS discourse for too long. Ultimately, it is to acknowledge and to bring humanity back into the areas which may have been disconnected, in the hopes of promoting a genuine and honest 'journeying together' with Indigenous peoples out of this difficult legacy.

### **1.1 Important Concerns and Challenges:**

*"I think the hardest thing is when you confront the way colonialism has affected us personally...in our families....you know, the attitudes that we grow up taking for granted and it's really hard to deconstruct those without hurting the people you love..." (Victoria, transcript, 2012)*

During this research process, I have continually questioned whether or not I should attempt to capture these Settler stories and the IRS legacy experiences. Despite my belief in the need to open dialogical space and to confront the intergenerational silence, I also see so much space and time that has been dominated by the Settler voice. My desire for this work is ultimately to attempt to open further space for 'critically hopeful' bettered relations. I have come to see that although it is very important to acknowledge the amount of space and voice that we as Settler Canadians have taken up, it is also equally crucial to acknowledge the lack of space and voice

that we as Settler Canadians have offered with regards to our colonizing presence. It is important for me to convey that I am in no way attempting to provide an excuse or watered down understanding for the severity of the IRS legacy in Indigenous communities. Rather I see it as crucially important to expose the Settler voices in the IRS legacy in hopes of better understanding the legacy's potential burden. This work is not intended to take away from or dishonour the greatly needed voice of Indigenous communities and Survivors on the subject. As mentioned, it is instead an attempt to acknowledge the need for Settlers to begin to speak up in ways that can be humanizing; to confront the way we also have both participated in and become dehumanized in the face of the IRS colonial legacy.

As mentioned I deeply desired to uphold the values of 'do no harm' for all, specific to the participants and their families in this work. Having said this, I have had to evaluate what the notion of 'do no harm' might mean in the context of Settler privilege and benefit in light of the IRS history. In the midst of my concerns, I have been reminded of some studies on the intergenerational legacy of the German Holocaust looking at perpetrator's families. These studies convey that there are indeed important understandings to be gained from shedding light on such experiences. For instance, researchers working with Holocaust survivors and Nazi descendants have used dialogue groups as a methodology for uncovering, healing and moving forward from lingering societal trauma (Kaslow, 1999). The documentary *Inheritance* portrays the meeting between a prominent Nazi commander's daughter and a Jewish survivor who lived under the Commander's control (Moll, 2009). This powerful documentary offers much insight into the ways in which survivors, family members and descendants of perpetrators each experience the burden of systemically abusive regimes. It can be seen that the aftermath of experiences felt by survivors, perpetrators, and their families can look quite different.

Here in Canada, there have been a few studies to date attempting to open dialogue between former IRS staff, IRS Survivors and their families. One study captured IRS staff accounts, and sought to open dialogue by acquiring the response to these accounts by a group of Indigenous participants (Chambers, 2003). In this study there were concerns by some of the Indigenous participants around the validity of capturing the perspectives of staff (Chambers, 2003: 37). Some of the Indigenous participants expressed feelings of mistrust that the former staff would not ‘tell the truth’ as it was thought that the former staff would just try to justify their work at the schools (Chambers, 2003:37). Groundings of such feelings of mistrust were witnessed at the TRC Regional Event in Victoria, when an Oblate Brother justified the work he had done in an IRS (Qwul’sih’yah’maht (Robina Thomas. N.d:12). An Indigenous member of Chamber’s work also addressed the concern that her research would just be another white perspective dominating the discourse and acting as an excuse for the wrongs done (Chambers, 2003). Based on Chambers work, it is important to consider the implications of facilitating a space for such voices to come forward. Payne (2008) illustrates the challenges and considerations that should be made in promoting perpetrator confessions. Echoing these concerns, I have attempted to address such fears in my own work.<sup>9</sup> In the case of the work in this thesis, it attempts to capture the experiences, rather than confessions, of bystanders to the IRS system, which is an important difference to consider.

Another point of concern surrounds the argument that allowing space for such truth-telling could perpetuate the hurt and pain in others by dwelling on such difficult issues. There is a potential to cause discomfort on both sides in the sense of bringing up difficult issues of abuse, neglect, and feelings surrounding the IRS legacy. In recognition of such concerns, I have

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<sup>9</sup> Please see chapter two for a more detailed explanation.

attempted to be ever-mindful in this process and to tread cautiously during this entire work. I have come to recognize that it is a very fine line to walk in attempting to honour and respect all involved in light of the abuse and pain of Survivors and their families. Concerns for ‘do no harm’ on both sides are juxtaposed against years of oppression and pain for Indigenous peoples. I have woken up many nights with a fear of how to walk the fine line of health and wellness for all, while attempting to open this important dialogue in an honest and critical way. Through my continued accountability to the participants, my thesis committee, family and friends both Indigenous and non-Indigenous, I have strived to promote a space of openness. In acknowledgement of being a benefactor of these harms, it could be quite easy for the Settler experience to include feelings of guilt, shame and denial. Understanding this, the work here strives to take an honest and critical look at the IRS legacy, however difficult it might be, while not causing more harm to Indigenous people than has already been done. I have attempted to further promote a humanizing approach through adding my own voice to the dialogue. I have seen that sometimes the healthiest way to approach discomfort and pain with others is to confront it in ourselves first. My hopes are that I have managed to find the ‘human’ voice of connection for all involved.

Studies also discuss the importance of opening these doors in order to help move a society forward after systematic abuses have occurred on a large scale (Livingston, 2010; Kaslow, 1999). It is also important to acknowledge and clarify what notions such as *moving forward* and *recovery* means with regards to the IRS legacy and this research. Recovery here is said within the light of the need for Settlers to better understand and face our own legacy of colonialism and guilt/denial, which is perhaps crucial for transforming Indigenous/non-Indigenous future relations. To be clear, notions of moving forward are not meant as a way of

washing over a ‘sad chapter’ of history, as has been stated by some. Rather, it is meant as an acknowledgement that there is a crucial need for change if the colonial legacy of the IRS legacy is to be overcome.

Throughout this thesis, I have continually wrestled with my identity in attempting to open the type of dialogue. Interestingly, I have found that much of the work that explores the experiences of the descendants of perpetrators in conflict, such as the Holocaust, has been done by descendants of survivors. The implications of this difference of positioning are important to consider. For instance, I began to question if as a non-Survivor and non-descendent, I should in fact be the person attempting to open this Settler descendent dialogue. These questions surrounded a desire to respect the stories of the Settler participants, while wanting to honour and support the Indigenous Survivors and their family members; I continually wondered if this work should have waited to be done by an Indigenous descendent. Seeing such positioning as important, I believe an Indigenous descendent attempting to capture the experiences of IRS Settler staff descendants would offer a crucial voice to this narrative; however, this is said with great recognition of how difficult such a work may be for someone in that position. These thoughts are reflected more in detail in the ‘future research’ section of this thesis.

Throughout this process, I have spoken with Indigenous people around me who are themselves intergenerational IRS Survivors or family members of an IRS Survivor. To my relief and surprise, all of them have been supportive in my desire to do this work. One friend in particular told me that it was these conversations led by Settlers that gives him critical hope for the future. He said he recognized in speaking with me that we both have been left with a legacy of the colonial history, and that it was meaningful for him to that I was attempting to ‘hold up the mirror’; to look at my colonial attitudes and move in the discomfort. Such support has meant a

great deal to me in terms of moving forward with this process. In recognition of my situating myself in this work as a non-descendent of an IRS staff, it was important for me to convey my deep gratitude to the two participants who came forward for their willingness to share their experiences with me.

With these concerns and challenges surrounding this work, I have attempted to capture and explore the narratives of the descendants of former IRS staff. Taking these concerns and cautions forward, this work then, is a starting point for what I see as an important dialogue; it is a place of coming to the table to begin the complex, difficult, yet imperative conversation of needed accountability and recovery.

### **1.3 My Voice**

It is our opinion that one of the most fundamental principles of Aboriginal research methodology is the necessity for the researcher to locate himself or herself. Identifying, at the outset, the location from which the voice of the researcher emanates is an Aboriginal way of ensuring that those who study, write, and participate in knowledge creation are accountable for their own positionality (Absolon and Willet, as seen in Brown & Strega, 2005:97).

It is imperative that I ground this work by acknowledging who I am and where I come from. Although the above quote by Absolon and Willet indicates situating oneself within an Indigenous methodology, I have come to see that this is an important decolonizing principle for myself as a Settler specifically within the work here. Locating myself is not only to convey any potential bias that I may bring to the work, but also to strive to work from within a decolonizing perspective of holding myself, as researcher, responsible to my own research questions so as not to objectify and dehumanize myself or the participants involved.

I come to this work as a 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> generation Settler to Canada. From what little I do know about my family history, my ancestors came from the British Isles: England and Ireland. Currently I live on unceded traditional territory of the Lkwungen (Songhees) territory, in what is now known by its colonial name as Victoria, British Columbia. I was born and raised in Northern

Alberta, on traditional Cree and Beaver territory, with a reserve about 45 minutes out of the city. As a result of this location I grew up aware of this Indigenous presence and the often real and distinct divisions between my community and this Indigenous community. I also come to this work having a half-sister who is part Chinese, and part Métis. She grew up with her mother and as a result, growing up I never really got to know her very well. It was not until recently, while doing this work that she spoke to me about her having family members who attended a residential school in Alberta. In a desire to honour and respect my family's privacy, I will not say much more about this relation except that this is one of the reasons that I approach this thesis from something more than just an academic level. Having several friends who are intergenerational Survivors, as well as my own personal history; this topic is not something that I have done abstractly or out of pure curiosity, but rather it reaches a deeply personal chord for me.

I also approach this work with a history of having been involved with a Christian faith, although today, I do not recognize myself as Christian; I still maintain a deep spiritual belief not necessarily based on any one faith tradition. I was not raised in a Christian household, and had come to this faith at the age of 18, having renounced any belief in God after my brother passed away when I was 11. For this reason, I continually approached this faith and tradition with a critical analysis. For close to four years, later in my early twenties, I worked internationally with an Indigenous-led Christian mission organization. This group was Indigenous led and focused on decolonizing Christian faith communities through promoting cultural awareness and acceptance. It was with this organization that I began my own decolonizing journey and was deeply challenged about my 'whiteness' and colonial mentalities (although not necessarily called that). After this experience, I more deeply desired to critically examine my Christian faith, and so I

also completed my undergraduate degree at a liberal arts Christian university. I mention this history specifically in light of the topic of residential schools having been operated by various church communities.

Honestly, in light of residential schools, colonization and a deeper understanding of religious imperialism<sup>10</sup>, one of my most difficult biographical pieces that I carry today is that I worked with a Christian organization. Many in my present social circle may be very surprised to know this piece of my history because I never talk about it. This fear of disclosure is mostly in light of a similar fear faced by Victoria Freeman (2000) in her realization of the harm that can surface in attempts to *do good*. For this reason, in many ways I have cringed in shame and fear that somehow I might have managed to promote a paternalistic, Christian imperialistic mentality to others. I would like to justify this past, to say that it was not your typical mission job; that it was created and run entirely by strong Indigenous leaders who worked on promoting decolonization, cultural awareness, acceptance of being cultural and Christian. Although all of this is true, in many ways, I am unable to sit in this justification for myself as a Settler. A sense of fear and shame is partially what propelled me to live in silence of my history, which has been very much confronted in light of the topic of colonial silence or amnesia in this thesis.

I will speak more to these experiences in the findings section, but think it is important to say here that such experiences have given me a personal insight into many of the issues that surround the residential school policy and its legacy. I feel it is important to name this identity piece for myself as researcher, because I see it as crucial to be aware of any bias I may have in

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<sup>10</sup> “Imperialism has been the most powerful force in world history over the last four or five centuries, carving up whole continents while oppressing indigenous peoples and obliterating entire civilizations... By ‘imperialism’ I mean the process whereby the dominant politico-economic interests of one nation expropriate for their own enrichment the land, labor, raw materials, and markets of another people.” (Parenti, M. 2005)

approaching the subject here. Although I have left this faith tradition, I have very close friends and family who are still within these traditions, and hold great respect for many of those I have met and worked with in these communities. I also feel it extremely important to recognize the need to hold the deep complexity that exists within these faith traditions, although for the purposes of this thesis, I will not be going into detail about this. I earnestly desire to remain respectful of those connected to such traditions; however I believe it is important to honestly challenge the ways in which the colonial legacy may be permeating these traditions today.<sup>11</sup>

The legacy of colonialism and residential schools is a deeply complex subject, and there is a hard line in presenting it with justice despite whichever perspective I might bring. In embarking on this research many have expressed to me that this work seemed very interesting and important; they shared that they felt I was courageous to be opening such a difficult dialogue. On the other side, I have been questioned by some who are Indigenous, asking why shedding light to this truth as a Settler is ‘courageous’ in light of the horrible treatment of IRS Survivors. I have spent a lot of time pondering this question and have found it is questions like this that keep me continually grounded throughout doing this work. Other Settlers’ words on the same journey have also helped to ground me:

This brings us back to the question of what we Settlers should do if we wish to truly become allies. Asked frequently, and in many different settings, it is important to understand that, as an honest, engaged question, there is nothing wrong with it. However, if the question is a dishonest one, then it only serves to perpetuate all the negative aspects of colonial Settler society. Too often, this question is motivated by feelings of guilt or shame, generated when Settler people encounter the undeniable consequences of their lifestyles in the oppression of Indigenous peoples. This indicates a concern for the problems evident in Settler society as a whole, but often a lack of willingness to sacrifice personally in order to solve the problems that have been presented. Here, the more direct question is actually, ‘How do I restore comfort for myself? (Barker, 2010:321)

I have had to honestly ask myself my motivations for doing this work. I have had to ask myself whether I am attempting to appease guilt, shame, and to find a way to be comfortable

<sup>11</sup> I will speak to this further in the Findings section of chapter 4.

again; to somehow maintain my sense of innocence and ignorance. I have found this thesis to be extremely challenging based on my fears of walking the fine line of health for all involved, as previously mentioned. As a Settler, I have had great moments where I honestly do not want to look at this IRS subject, and for this reasons I have come to view this work not so much as courageous, but rather as necessary. I would like to remain in my comfortable realm, living my life and not caring or delving into these hard places. And, the crux of the matter is that in many ways I have that option. This work has been a great reminder of that for me. I have heard from some that this is a key identifier of the colonial legacy: I, as a Settler, have the option to turn away symbolically speaking. I have the ability to shut off the abusive, horrible history because it did not happen to me; it was me happening to them. My reality is of a dominant white privilege, with all that that entails, including my ability to live in denial.

So this is partly why I desired to research this topic; I felt it was important to confront the ways in which the residential school legacy might be impacting my life and the life of other Settlers, in an attempt to confront the denial and silence that has been so easy to live in. Up front, I can see how this legacy has burdened me with my colonial attitudes, my sense of entitlement to a land that was taken. I hesitate to speak about these issues in this way because I know that it may come across as though I am potentially just a white person attempting to avoid blame by being a *good* Settler. Or further, that I am attempting to say that my life has been as damaged by residential schools as an Indigenous person's: this in no way my intention; however, my desire to have an honest relation with those who are Indigenous, to live in a way that honours historic treaties remains tainted and strained within my colonial presence and this IRS legacy.

I also have attempted to be ever mindful of the *good Settler* syndrome, which lets me off the hook of perpetration by thinking I am somehow morally better than other Settlers in

confronting this subject. For this reason, it has been extremely important for me to have input from a community of people including my family, friends, participants of this work and thesis committee to maintain a balanced sense of perspective throughout this process; to call me out of my own IRS legacy of denial and desire to be located as a *good Settler* if I had strayed in this direction. More than anything I have come to see the importance of identity in moving forward towards what it means to be an ally working in honest solidarity with Indigenous peoples of this land.

## **Chapter 2: The Voices of *This World***

At the mid-way point of Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commission, the bibliography of the terrible legacy of residential schools continues to grow. After decades of silence, IRS Survivor's voices are beginning to penetrate some Canadians' consciousness with the terrible effects this colonial policy has left, challenging any previous misunderstandings of the IRS institutions. More is now being understood around the Indigenous trauma suffered. Grand Chief Edward John of the First Nations Task Force Group illustrated such a legacy as part of a statement forwarded to the Minister of Justice, Kim Campbell in 1992 (as seen in Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples Report (RCAP), 1996:359): "The effect of the residential school system is like a disease ripping through our communities." The RCAP elaborated on the Chief's statement:

The chiefs' conclusion was not a rhetorical flourish; it was literally true. By the mid- 1980s, it was widely and publicly recognized that the residential school experience, in the north and in the south, like smallpox and tuberculosis in earlier decades, had devastated and continued to devastate communities. The schools were, with the agents and instruments of economic and political marginalization, part of the contagion of colonization. In their direct attack on language, beliefs and spirituality, the schools had been a particularly virulent strain of that epidemic of empire, sapping the children's bodies and beings. (RCAP, 1996:359)

Although written in 1996, the truth of this statement continues to ring true; a state of emergency was declared by leaders of a Vancouver Island First Nation, due to a rash of suicides

and attempted suicides in their communities (CBC, The Canadian Press, May 11/2012). Ian Knipe, director of Aboriginal Health for the Vancouver Island Health Authority, stated in response to the suicides that "...often it relates to issues arising from residential schools, from apprehension, from the impact of colonization on First Nations" (CBC, The Canadian Press, May 11/2012).

The Canadian residential school system, as an Aboriginal *civilizing* policy, is said to have begun in 1879 and lasted over a century into the 1990s. Thousands of Indigenous children were forcibly taken from their homes and communities to live in schools frequented by abuse, neglect, and in many cases death. These schools and residences were a church-state partnership between the government and various churches (Catholic, Presbyterian, Baptist, Anglican, United, Methodist); the government would fund and provide the policies for the schools, while the churches would run them. It has become known that the policy and actions of these schools were aimed ultimately at cultural genocide, if not more. The schools were organized to 'kill the Indian in the child' as discussed by Milloy: "To kill the Indian" in the child, the Department and churches aimed at severing the artery of culture that ran between Aboriginal generations" (Milloy, 1999:42). Milloy goes on:

This was more than a rhetorical flourish or figurative act. It took on a sharp and traumatic reality in the life of each child who was separated from parents and community and isolated in a threatening world hostile to identity, traditional ritual, and language. The system of transformation was suffused with a similar latent savagery. (Milloy, 1999: 42)

It has been found that approximately 150,000 or more First Nations, Inuit, and Métis children were placed in residential schools and were typically forbidden to speak their languages or access any of their traditional practices (Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 2012). Many would die from such policies due to neglect, starvation, illness, and attempted runaways. The

impact of such an attempted genocide can be clearly observed in the generations of Indigenous communities across Canada today:

Because residential schools operated for well more than a century, their impact has been transmitted from grandparents to parents to children. This legacy from one generation to the next has contributed to social problems, poor health, and low educational success rates in Aboriginal communities today. (Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 2012:1)

Beginning in the 1990s thousands of former students of these schools started to break the silence about the truth of this history. Many began to take legal action against the churches and the federal government, with these actions resulting in the formation of the largest class-action suit in Canada and the implementation of the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement. Encompassing several elements, the Agreement included compensation to former students, and the establishment of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. In the TRC's mid-way report and publication, Canadians have been challenged to not only acknowledge this dark history, but to embrace the need for collective responsibility:

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...In talking about residential schools and their legacy, we are not talking about an Aboriginal problem, but a Canadian problem. It is not simply a dark chapter from our past. It was integral to the making of Canada. Although the schools are no longer in operation, the last ones did not close until the 1990's. The colonial framework of which they were a central element has not been dismantled. One can see its impact in the social, economic, and political challenges that Aboriginal communities struggle with every day. It is present also in the attitudes that too often shape the relations between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples in Canada. (Truth and Reconciliation Publication, 2012: 2-3)

Despite the TRC's attempts at education, and calls for acknowledgement, a survey (Environics Institute, 2010:5) reveals that more than half of Canadians still have never read or heard anything about residential schools. The bravery of the IRS Survivors to come forward has resulted in formal apologies by the many of the churches involved and finally by the federal government in 2008; however, as one can see, there are deep issues with the churches and the Government apologizing for harms that almost half of Canadians remain to be unaware of. It is

from here that adding components for understanding both the Indigenous and Settler aspects of the IRS legacy to national educational curriculum become imperative for *journeying together*.

One can physically see in the justice system, in the health care system, in the school system, in the child and youth care system, the aftermath and continuation of such civilizing colonial policies on generations of Indigenous communities. While many of the histories found to be confronting this legacy convey the need for non-Indigenous Canadians to step up and confront Canada's dark past, what they do not speak to are the specific ways in which the residential school policies, attitudes and history are continuing to impact generations of Settler Canadians living today. Just as such an abusive system can be seen having its imprint on generations of Indigenous communities today, we can see through years of Settler silence and the continuation of much of the similar colonial attitudes within Canada, that we as Settlers have not come out of this legacy unscathed either.

Aside from Dr. Victoria Freeman's work (2000), there have been to date, no studies looking at the legacy of residential schools on Canadians, specific to non-Indigenous descendants of former IRS staff. As mentioned in a previous section of this thesis, it is anticipated that the IRS legacy on this specific group will look extremely different from the legacy impact on Indigenous communities and IRS Survivors.

Studies done on other systemically abusive systems looking at the generational legacy left on the descendants of the perpetrator population convey the importance of understanding such differences (Bar-On, 1989; Magill & Hamber, 2011). Bar-On, a Jewish Israeli psychologist, undertook one of the earlier studies looking at the children of Nazi perpetrators, expressing similar legacy questions:

What kind of hope did they [perpetrators] have, or transmit to their own children?... The psychological literature was loaded with research findings and reports about the children, even the grandchildren, of survivors. But I could uncover hardly a word about the perpetrators and

their children. Was it that the children remained unaffected by their parent's past, or was it that nobody had tried to find out?...I asked the question: What do you think happened to the children of Holocaust perpetrators? (Bar-On, 1989:9-10)

Bar-On, a Jewish descendent, aptly confronts the sensitivity he faced in walking on such difficult terrain:

Back in Israel, when I spoke about my experiences with friends and colleagues, many of them couldn't listen. Schlomo said, 'We have enough trouble of our own. Why do you have to tell us their side of the picture? We don't want to know about it!' (Bar-On, 1989:13)

Despite the sensitivity and difficulty, Bar-On goes on to express his personal reasons, as a Jewish persons, for seeing importance in this type of research:

I undertook this research with an idea: to locate and interview children of the Nazi generation in Germany...I was gratified to discover not only that such encounters could take place, but that they could provide a setting for very different individuals to talk together, to learn and unlearn. These interviews record our conversations and our own interaction – questioning, probing, commenting. For me, these journeys toward hope have become signposts for my own. (Bar-On, 1989:332)

Bar-On, later organized a conference centered on this research, and invited the interviewees to attend. One interviewee expressed his own understanding of his experience with the generational legacy of being a child of a Nazi 'collaborator':

I sit watching people, over there, to the left of the window, they are probably from Holland. I hear the familiar sounds that remind me of the happy childhood days I spent with Dutch relatives. But what is that I hear? The child of a collaborator? Maybe I am not so alone after all...We children of perpetrators form into a separate discussion group...almost all of us are teachers, attorneys, social workers, and so on...During the course of the conference, I learn a bit more about the delayed effects of all this on us, the generation after... (Bar-On, 1989:334-335)

Other studies have also illustrated the importance in this type of generational research on conflict studies. Magill & Hamber (2011) conducted a comparative study looking at generational notions of reconciliation in light of the aftermath of national conflict. Specifically, they sought to understand the way in which children and youth experienced conflict in their regions (Magill & Hamber, 2011:512). Highlighting the intergenerational legacy and its role in perpetuating conflict, this particular study found that:

In both regions, participants were frustrated by the older generations' failure to make meaningful progress toward reconciliation. There was a sense that prejudices, be they sectarian or ethnic were being passed down from their parents' and grandparents' generations to their

own. One participant, for example, reflected that it might be possible to overcome the legacies of the past “if you didn’t keep bringing it on generation to generation. (Magill & Hamber, 2011:518-19)

It is important here to note that as there are virtually no studies looking at the generational legacy on non-Indigenous descendants of IRS staff, only comparative literature is provided here. As such, it is important to note the differences and limitations of such comparisons. For instance, the Holocaust took place in Germany where there were not necessarily notions of assimilation, appropriated land, and the Indigenous-Settler colonial history as similar to Canada.

Other research, such as Regan (2010) has looked at the IRS Settler legacy from a broader lens and Freeman (2000) has highlighted the crucial need for looking into intergenerational transference in light of Canada’s colonial past:

I began to think about the things we choose to honour, the things we choose to forget, the things we resurrect and re-interpret...The psychic history of each family is embedded in both what is said and what is left unsaid; what is not talked about, repeated, or passed down can be as important, even more important, than what we are conscious of. There is the silence of those who cannot speak or to whom no one would or even could listen, and the silence of those who choose to remain silent so as not to incriminate themselves. There is also the silence born of the fear of revisiting pain or stirring up anger-our own or that of others. (Freeman, 2000: xvii)

Freeman goes on to express deeper reasons for unveiling her personal family history in light of colonization:

I had no connection to this history. I didn't know what various events might mean to my progenitors or what their role in those events might have been, and my knowledge of myself was diminished as a result. For most of us in the Western tradition, history appears to be not of our making. Hence we have no responsibility for it. (Freeman, 2000:xviii)

When deeply systemic, wide-spread, genocide (cultural, or other) occurs, it becomes imperative to unhinge the doors that have been closed in silence so that needed change can occur (Regan, 2010). It is, then, even more imperative that this airing out should not only include those who were victims of such a horrible policy, but also all members of the society; those who supported, implemented and even those seen as bystanders of the abusive system. Milloy and his in depth

look at the residential school policy and history penetrates to the heart of this study and the need for this research:

...it is critical that non-Aboriginal people study and write about the schools, for not to do so on the premise that it is not our story, too, is to marginalize it as we did Aboriginal people themselves, to reserve it for them as a site of suffering and grievance and to refuse to make it a site of introspection, discovery, and extirpation – a site of self-knowledge from which we can understand not only who we have been as Canadians but who we must become if we are to deal justly with the Aboriginal people of this land.”

(Milloy, 1999: xviii)

Another important aspect in attempting to gain an understanding of the colonial history of Canada revolves around the voices that are being heard and those that are not heard (Freeman, 2000; Regan, 2010). As such, in my attempt to research the legacy of residential schools in Canada, it became clear that the missing voice currently existing in the IRS legacy is that of Settler Canadians, and more specifically those most closely connected to the former IRS staff working in the schools. What the IRS story does currently portray is the horrible wrongs that were committed, but for many it would seem these acts were done by the *government*, the *churches*, the *staff*; someone other than you or I. Of course, many agree that someone should and needs to take responsibility for this horrible societal violence, but who and, then, more importantly how? It is as if the schools were run by ghosts, existing in a land far distant from current Canadian society.

Some scholars have attempted to contribute to understanding the IRS legacy with regards to those staffing the schools. Hildebrand (2003) offers a comprehensive understanding on IRS staff perspectives of four IRS Presbyterian schools in Canada from 1888 to 1923. Capturing these staff perspectives is important in furthering the understanding of the legacy left by the IRS system. Although highlighting staff perspectives is important, Hildebrand does not speak much to the IRS legacy on staff families or Canadian intergenerational perspectives. Another scholar, Natalie Chambers also attempted to open up dialogue in looking at former IRS staff experiences

(Chambers, 2003). My research here attempts to parallel a similar vein within Chamber's work.

Although her work does not necessarily focus on intergenerational impact of the colonial legacy on Settler descendants specific to the IRS, Chambers highlights the generational colonial legacy she sees existing for Settlers having been historically colonized:

Contemporary British people have embraced this history of cultural genocide, and the school curriculum proudly includes the heritage of our assimilation. For thousands of years the descendants of British and European colonizers have continued to use this thinking in their attempts to eliminate Indigenous peoples all over the world, in Canada, the United States, Australia, and India, to name a few (Chambers, 2003:22).

Although she does not specifically address the gap in perspective of looking at descendants of former Settler IRS staff, Chambers acknowledges in her 'future research' section that a study of this nature would be important (Chambers, 2003).

In an attempt to situate this work within a more contextual environment, I was able to locate a study looking at addressing the 'white' legacy of the policy of Apartheid in South Africa in Samantha Vice's (2010) "How do I live in this strange place?" Regan states "...the healing metaphor has been used almost exclusively with regard to Indigenous peoples. We have heard far less about the settler need to heal" (Regan, 2010:175). As with Regan, Vice also speaks to the needed recovery of white South Africans:

If we are a problem, we should perhaps concentrate on recovering and rehabilitating our selves. I shall suggest that because of peculiarities of the South African situation, this personal, inward-directed project should be cultivated with humility and in (a certain kind of) silence. (Vice, 2010:324)

Chrisjohn and Young (1997) have reiterated the needed focus on recovery of Settlers in their ironic classification of the 'residential school syndrome'.

It is important here to convey that just as the face of the IRS legacy looks different between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people in Canada, I propose that the needed healing and recovery from such a legacy will also look entirely different between these two communities. I choose to use the word 'recovery' rather than 'heal' in the context of Settler Canadians due to the

fact that as Canadians, our recovery is around the oppressive attitudes and actions that supported and actively administered such violent colonial policies, as well as decades of silence.<sup>12</sup> This being said, Regan (2010) and others (Barker, 2006; 2010) challenge that for Settler Canadians there is a real need to decolonize as part of moving forward towards bettered relations. This decolonization needs to include a space where conversations and dialogues involve both Survivor and Settler experiences within avenues that promote Indigenous traditions and ways of being (Regan, 2010). Such spaces illustrate how critical dialogue is imperative in both recovery and healing:

Reconciliation conceptualized as an intercultural encounter involves creating a space for critical dialogue – rooted in testimonial, ceremonial, and commemorative practices – between Indian residential school survivors and settlers who are either directly or indirectly implicated in the school system itself as well as other assimilationist policies. (Regan, 2010:41)

As previously mentioned, the motivation to bring to light the Settler voice with regards to the Indian Residential School era comes from a place of recognizing that the attitudes and actions of the government, churches and staff did not operate in a vacuum, as can be seen in other countries dealing with similar traumatic pasts (Reichel, 1989; Bar-On, 1989; Staub, 2006). The lack of the Settler Canadian voice on this topic can seek to only perpetuate the similar colonial mentality that the residential school legacy is again an ‘Indigenous problem’:

Much of the dialogue to date has taken place within Aboriginal communities, among survivors of abuse and their families, both issuing from and bolstering the Main Street idea that the Indian Residential School System is an “Aboriginal issue,” a side discussion on, if not beyond, the margins of Canadian society. Further, this notion is compounded by the reserve system, rooted in Canada’s nineteenth century conception of “the Indian problem.” (Erasmus, in DeGagné et al, 2011: vii-viii)

Regan’s work discusses how specifically as Settlers we can produce and reproduce the civilizing, assimilationist, and colonizing attitudes today that were present in the residential

<sup>12</sup> Although I will use the word ‘recovery’ with regards to the Settler IRS legacy, other scholars referenced throughout this thesis choose to use the word ‘healing’. From this standpoint, I do not sense a great difference between the two words in terms of moving forward, and so I will include such references. However, I have opted to delineate between ‘healing’ and ‘recovery’ within this work in order to highlight the differences between the IRS burden as felt by Indigenous communities, and by that of Settlers.

school policy (Regan, 2010) and sets the stage for the research in this thesis. She calls for Canadians to understand our piece in the IRS history:

Although the debilitating impacts of sexual, physical, and psychological abuse upon children are self-evident, and Canadians condemn such practices, the problematic assimilation policy that gave rise to such abuses is less understood by the Canadian public. To those who argue that they are not responsible, because they were not directly involved with the residential schools, I say that, as Canadian citizens, we are ultimately responsible for the past and present actions of our government...We can better understand how a problematic mentality of benevolent paternalism became a rationale and justification for acquiring Indigenous lands and resources, and drove the creation of prescriptive education policies that ran counter to the treaty relationship. Equally importantly, we can explore how this mentality continues to influence Indigenous-settler relations today... (Regan, 2011:4)

An important element in this work then, is the need for deconstructing the IRS legacy specific to Settler Canadians. Regan (2010) points out that it becomes important to more deeply understand colonizer ignorance of denial and that of ‘not knowing’: “Claiming ignorance is a colonial strategy – a way of proclaiming our ignorance because “we did not know”” (Regan, 2010: 41). In this sense, the lack of promotion for education of the IRS history and its legacy could be a way of assuaging our fear of challenging our present colonial privilege. Memmi (1991) also outlines the conflicting values that he sees as plaguing the ‘colonizer’:

He cannot even resolve to avoid them [the colonized]. He must constantly live in relation to them, for it is this very alliance which enables him to lead the life which he decided to look for in the colonies; it is this relationship which is lucrative, which creates privilege...While he [the colonizer] cannot help discovering this, there is no danger that official speeches might change his mind, for those speeches were drafted by him or his cousin or, his friend...It is impossible for him not to be aware of the constant illegitimacy of his status. (Memmi, 1991:8).

It becomes imperative to rethink what constitutes violence, especially with regards to colonialism (Regan, 2010:5). Notions of subjective, symbolic and structural violence are important to consider. In this sense, subjective violence is that of “violence enacted by social agents, evil individuals, disciplined repressive apparatuses, fanatical crowds...the most visible [type of violence]” (Zizek, 2008:10). Zizek identifies systemic and symbolic violence as the invisible forms that often evade our senses, such as structural oppression, which is often the most important form of violence to understanding conflict:

At the forefront of our minds, the obvious signals of violence are acts of crime and terror, civil unrest, international conflict. But we should learn to step back, disentangle ourselves from the fascinating lure of this directly visible ‘subjective’ violence, violence performed by a clearly identifiable agent. We need to perceive the contours of the background which generates such outbursts. A step back enables us to identify a violence that sustains our very efforts to fight violence and to promote tolerance. (Zizek, 2008:1)

Calling into question our desire to return conflict-ridden situations to a state of ‘normal’, Zizek offers that:

...subjective and objective violence cannot be perceived from the same standpoint: subjective violence is experienced as such against the background of a non-violence zero level. It is seen as a perturbation of the ‘normal’, peaceful state of things. However, objective violence is precisely the violence inherent to this ‘normal’ state of things. (Zizek, 2008:2)

He goes on to clarify:

We’re talking here of the violence inherent in a system: not only direct physical violence, but also the more subtle forms of coercion that sustain relations of domination and exploitation, including the threat of violence. (Zizek, 2008:2)

In light of these notions of colonial ignorance and violence, the work here then is an attempt to re-story the IRS legacy with a different lens other than the dominant ‘Standard Account’, which in many ways abdicates Settlers from the story (Chrisjohn and Young, 1997). Despite a desire for ignorance, Memmi conveys that such ‘not knowing’ will eventually be confronted:

Having found profit either by choice or by chance, the colonizer has nevertheless not yet become aware of the historic role which will be his. He is lacking one step in understanding his new status; he must also understand the origin and significance of this profit. Actually, this is not long in coming. For how long could he fail to see the misery of the colonized and the relation of that misery to his own comfort? He realizes that this easy profit is so great only because it is wrested from others. In short, he finds two things in one: he discovers the existence of the colonizer as he discovers his own privilege. (Memmi, 1991: 7)

Upon awakening to such colonial privilege, intergenerational Settlers or colonizers are left with the ‘burden’ of choice; to either try and confront such injustice, ultimately giving up places of privilege and power, or to maintain the status quo. Vice speaks to the legacy of violence left for white South Africans in the wake of the Apartheid policy: “I am a white South African, undeniably a product of the Apartheid system and undeniably still benefiting from it” (Vice, 2010:323). The same statement can be made about Settlers living in Canada in the wake of

colonialism and policies such as residential schools. Vice goes on to express her views on ‘whiteness’ studies, troubling notions of ‘privilege’ and the way in which she uses this term in South Africa:

The advantages that accrue to whiteness are usually termed “privileges” in the literature and I will use the term although it does not strike me as altogether appropriate. Privileges, for instance, often refer to goods that one cannot expect as one’s due, that one has not got a right to, and it is clear that many ways in which whites are advantaged are, in fact, ways that all people should be able to expect as their due. But I retain the term for it does, at least, suggest the sense of unearned, unshared, nonuniversal advantages. (Vice, 2010, p. 325)

I have used the term ‘Settler’ to describe all non-Indigenous Canadians who are now living as beneficiaries of colonial violence. This does not necessarily denote just ‘white’ people in Canada, as in Vice’s work; however, as I see a parallel in the notion of her use of ‘privilege’, I will use her understanding of this word here as well. Similarly to the questions I am asking in this thesis, Vice also wrestles with such notions in South Africa:

Under conditions of oppression, both the oppressed and the oppressors are morally damaged, although of course in different ways, and even if this damage is not their responsibility. In this paper, I will focus on the moral damage done to the oppressors’ character by habitual white privilege. I will argue that in spite of the non-voluntary origins of these habits, they are our responsibility and they call for appropriate moral responses. However, given the entrenched nature of habits, eradicating or changing them will be very difficult, needing more than argument and rational persuasion, and more than structural and institutional change. And the oppressed’s recognition of this justifies their suspicion of well-meaning attempts on the part of those entrenched in a system...” (Vice, 2010:325-326)

Vice goes on, speaking to the heart of understanding such legacies of the past, which inevitably relate to our Canadian context:

While it is no longer common for whites to be openly and obviously racist, it is impossibly optimistic to think that the ways of whites who grew up and were educated in this country are not in some way still whitely. Because of the brute facts of birth, few white people, however well-meaning and morally conscientious, will escape the habits of white privilege; their characters and modes of interaction with the world just will be constituted in ways that are morally damaging....in South Africa, the working and effects of privilege are starkly apparent; one cannot in good faith pretend they do not exist. Deciding how to live decently with this recognition is one of the main moral tasks facing all white people... (Vice, 2010:326)

Moving to discuss notions of guilt and responsibility, Vice’s argument brings to light the work of the South African TRC and calls for a deeper understanding around notions of collective responsibility with regards to dealing with the atrocities of the nation-wide Apartheid policy:

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) raised the question of white South Africans' mundane complicity in the Apartheid regime, even though it did not adequately explore it (and probably could not, given its remit). The focus on certain key figures in Apartheid atrocities allowed some whites to escape feelings of guilt—the crimes of Apartheid were performed not by them, but by certain figures of apparently inhuman evil...Whites could insist with some degree of sincerity—however naïve—that they knew nothing of the violence taking place daily and routinely at the hands of the security police. Despite this focus on serious individual wrongdoing in the TRC, issues of collective guilt certainly arose, and there is in South Africa much talk, usually dismissive, of "white guilt." These issues are complex, but there is always the risk of disingenuously absolving oneself from blame, and so guilt, by ignoring the other ways in which one, as a white person, participated in and upheld violent and demeaning structures... (Vice, 2010:21)

Notions of guilt and responsibility are mentioned here as potential elements of the burden that the IRS legacy asks Settlers, such as descendants of former staff to wrestle with. Reactions to Vice's paper were, as one can imagine, both varied and heated. In fact, this paper struck such a nerve in South Africa that an entire panel discussion was created and broadcast in order to discuss the notions that Vice challenged; in many ways, this was understandably so. The message that Vice (2010) ultimately offered was that white South Africans can live in this 'strange place,' of privilege and colonial legacy, by sitting in a place of humility and embracing a sense of grief for the wrongs committed. This involves working to postulate a place of supporting 'silence' with regards to how those previously oppressed choose to move forward (Vice, 2010). She troubles notions of shame, grief and silence, and outlines that these responses do not necessitate a place of inaction or passivity, but rather a posture of action in humility in confronting one's privilege. Speaking to the dominated stage that has historically and often still presently taken by a place of white privilege, sitting in a place of humility to acknowledge and feel regret for the oppression and wrongs is for Vice, a suited response. Highly contested of course, Vice finds that:

I do not think that white South Africans can in good faith feel attached in a "socially coherent" way to either their pasts or their futures when they realize themselves as an ongoing problem. Our attachment cannot wipe our moral slates clean or exempt us from the appropriateness of the responses I have been exploring. Unlike many other colonial legacies, which whites should certainly feel uncomfortable about, our history of injustice is recent, part of living memory, something whites benefit from in direct, unmediated ways—and therefore something that implicates each one's sense of self now. My argument for the appropriateness of feeling shame and

of responding to it with silence and humility depends not on some ancient wrong done in our name, but of our own ongoing to accept shame as both appropriate and troubling, and to turn one's attention to wrongdoings and their visible effects. Once again, then, the best moral response is the self with silence and if possible, humility. (Vice, 2010:337-338)

Confronting a sense of remorse and the importance of facing shame has also been highlighted in Jenkins (2006) restorative practice work with perpetrators of abuse. In his work, Jenkins speaks to what he considers to be the unavoidable work of facing shame in journeying towards restoration and the importance of then differentiating between "shaming and facing shame":

It is not possible to embark upon a restorative journey without facing shame. The experience of shame is a sense of disgrace which unavoidably accompanies deeper realizations about the nature and impact of dishonourable and destructive actions. However, this experience of shame seems highly restraining and disabling for men who have abused family members — the shame often feeling toxic to the point of annihilation. Shame and disgrace tend to motivate desperate attempts to run and hide from their presence...When a man faces shame he comes to his own realizations through recognizing a contradiction between his ethics and his actions. By contrast, shaming others is a political act, an attempt to coerce or compel (Jenkins, 2006:159)

Although such claims can be highly contested, much of what Vice and Jenkins wrestle with can be found as a parallel to much of what we as Settlers must wrestle with here in Canada in the light of the IRS legacy, although not without deep complexities.<sup>13</sup> This being said, it is important to note that the mention of shame here is not meant to imply that descendants of former staff or other Settlers will necessarily resonate with these feelings; however, they are mentioned here as a potential element of the Settler IRS burden. Hopefully, gaining an understanding as to the experiences with IRS legacy, specific to descendants of former IRS staff, will shed light on such complexities. As Regan conveys:

Important decolonizing lessons can be learned from the ways in which teachers, staff, and various officials chose to ignore, vigorously enforce, comply with, or resist residential school policies and practices in various times and places. (Regan, 2010: 5)

<sup>13</sup> I feel it is important to convey that I include this discussion on shame as it has come up as a potential feeling that Settler can feel in confronting the IRS legacy. This being said, it is important to clarify that I am not implying that descendants of former IRS staff will necessarily feel a sense of shame or remorse. Rather, that as it is a possible feeling, it is therefore, important to consider.

At the premise of her work, Regan illustrates that

Although, the prime minister assured First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples that “there is no place in Canada for the attitudes that inspired the Indian residential school system to ever prevail again,” my premise is that, unfortunately, such attitudes are still alive and well in today, rooted in settler historical myths and colonial mindsets. To understand why this is so, it is instructive to explore how colonial violence is woven into the fabric of Canadian history in an unbroken thread from past to present, which we must now unravel, upsetting our comfortable assumptions about the past. (Regan, 2011, 6)

Although there has not yet been much written specifically looking at the legacy on family members of those who worked in the schools, literature has been written on the history and attitudes present during the school era. Milloy’s *A National Crime* (1999) discusses in detail the attitudes, both societal, and of those operating the schools that contributed to the century long abusive policy. Such mindsets were present not just within the government and church officials, but within Canada as a whole as a colonial society. Pre-Indian Residential Settlement Agreement, Truth and Reconciliation Commission and Apology, Milloy ends his book acknowledging and calling for a deeper look at the way in which such attitudes and policies have impacted both Indigenous and Canadian communities:

It is essential...that, while the [Indigenous] healing proceeds, we strive to ensure that the terrible facts of the residential school system, along with its companion policies – community removal, the Indian Act, systemic discrimination in the justice system – become part of a new sense of what Canada has been and will continue to be if our historical record is not recognized for what it has meant to Aboriginal people and repudiated generation by generation. Only such a persistent historical process will allow Canadians to consider transformations in their society in an effort to discover ways of living in harmony with the original people of this land...The future must include making a place for those who have been affected by the schools to stand in dignity, to remember, to voice their sorrow and anger, and to be listened to with respect. With them, Canada needs to pursue justice and mutual healing... (Milloy, 1999:305)

Many authors who study Settler-Indigenous relations convey the deep importance of the understanding and educating about historical record of residential schools and colonialism (Regan, 2010; Milloy, 1999; Freeman, 2000; Barker, 2006). As much as the historical record is imperative, I echo such authors and argue that so too is the present record and the way in which this historical record lives on in the Settler generations of today. In studies of intergenerational

legacies left in the wake of countries that have suffered systemic nation-wide violence and genocide, it has become understood that:

The recognition that conflict can resurface in subsequent generations should be a cautionary tale for those societies that choose "official amnesia" as a way to deal with the past...Several cases illustrate the lesson that when the past is left covered up, it will be constantly returned to until it is resolved. (Borer (Ed), 2006, 40)

It can be seen that trauma discourses often address the trauma of victims, while leaving out the harms that may be experienced by those who were involved in propelling the injustice and their subsequent transmission of such trauma:

I think we need trauma discourses that look at the dynamic between victims and perpetrators and see that both of them are suffering from the psychic deformations of violent histories, albeit in different ways and with different responsibilities. Pervasive in violent histories is the transgenerational transmission of trauma, or, as Abraham and Torok put it, a history of ghostly hauntings by the phantoms of a silenced past. (Schwab, 2004:181)

Regan states: "holistic pathways to peace...require digging deeply into institutional barriers that perpetuate cycles of violence in order to re-story the past within the context of the present" (Regan, 2010:72). The intergenerational aftermath of historical injustices can be seen and felt, either consciously or unconsciously by those left to carry the weight. 'Transgenerational obligation' is a term that refers specifically to those from the 'perpetrator' population and the ancestral inheritance of 'ill-gotten gains' (Thompson, 2002:102). Studies have illustrated that shedding light on such inheritances is "the key to understanding arguments for reparations, and the key to bringing about reconciliation..." (Thompson, 2002:102). The notion of reparations for wrongs done by previous generations is a complicated and difficult subject. Questions surrounding why current Canadians have to pay for past wrongs, who are responsible, and how far back we should look, make the issue further complex. In a book on former Nazi's during the Holocaust, one former SS party member and officer conveyed the felt complexities surrounding responsibility:

"As a soldier, you just don't know a thing. Do you know what our government has in store for us right now? It's the same situation now as it was before World War II. It can be repeated, in a different way of course. One crazy guy will push the button. And then it will be your generation, if someone is still alive, that will be asked, 'Didn't you see it coming? Couldn't you stop it?'" (Reichel, 1989:164)

The complexities found here highlight the need to bring to light the intergenerational legacy of Canada's colonial past, specifically with regards to residential schools in order to have an open and honest conversation in moving forward, which inevitably should include questions of responsibility. A quote from Holocaust survivor Abraham Heschel comes to mind: "Few are guilty, but all are responsible" (Heschel, 1962:19). At any point, including during the residential schools era, we as Canadians could have, despite the challenge, attempted to reform the various oppressive and abusive colonial policies. Today, with its continued oppressive, patriarchal approach, the Indian Act continues to remain intact, perpetuating a parallel symbolic violence. Furthermore, it has been said that there are now more Indigenous children in the foster care system than at the height of the residential school era (Beaucage, 2011) and in many cases land continues to be developed on unceded territory. I speak to this with full understanding that such subjects mentioned here are deeply complex with a quagmire of conflict surrounding them and that this study is unable to address these aspects with any sense of justice; however, as mentioned, these elements are mentioned in order to highlight again, the need to begin to at least come out of the silence, to sit at the table and make honest attempts to confront such complexities.

Looking at the inheritance a perpetrator legacy can leave on succeeding generations, Thompson (2002) attempts to address issues of responsibility. Following true to the gap outlining the research of this thesis, Thompson's work does not convey much in the way of understanding the experiences of the actual legacy. It becomes important to acknowledge here

the great complexities and controversies that exist in the subjects of the IRS legacy, colonialism as well as notions of responsibility and guilt.

Despite our desire for colonial ignorance, in the case of residential schools, it has been found that many in Canada were aware of the goings on at these schools:

In the course of that history there were those who understood that such a terrible legacy was being created...Nevertheless, with very few exceptions, neither senior departmental officials nor churchmen nor members of Parliament raised their voices against the assumptions that underlay the system or its abusive character. And, of course, the memory did not and has not faded. It has persisted, festered and become a sorrowful monument, still casting a deep shadow over the lives of many Aboriginal people and communities and over the possibility of a new relationship between Aboriginal and non- Aboriginal Canadians (Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1996:312-313)

This being said, it has also been found that many staff in the schools may not have been aware of some of the horrible violence, such as sexual abuse, occurring right in front of them:

The sad thing is we did not know it [sexual abuse] was occurring. Students were too reticent to come forward. And it now appears that school staff likely did not know, and if they did, the morality of the day dictated that they, too, remain silent. DIAND staff have no record or recollection of reports — either verbal or written.(INAC file E6575-18, volume 10, To J. Fleury, Jr. from J. Tupper, 19 June 1990 as seen in Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples:360)

It is this culture of silence that I am most interested in understanding with regards to the potential transmission of legacy specific to Canada's Settler population.

Hannah Arendt, on the study of violence and power, discusses the way in which violence and power perpetuates itself through generations (Arendt, 1970:85). Acknowledging the relationship between violence and power can offer a potential understanding into some of the reasoning for the IRS policy in Canada:

...every decrease in power is an open invitation to violence – if only because those who hold power and feel it slipping from their hands, be they the government or be they the governed, have always found it difficult to resist the temptation to substitute violence for it. (Arendt, 1970:87)

As mentioned, issues of guilt and responsibility are tightly intertwined within the issues found in this complex legacy. It has been argued that if one does not challenge violent or abusive actions, they can be seen as complicit and supportive in these actions; non-violence in this case becomes a dangerous illusion. Ward Churchill muddies the waters of the term 'non-violence' stating that:

The preoccupation with avoiding actions that might “provoke violence” is thus not based on a sincere belief that violence will, or even can, truly be avoided. Pacifists, no less, than their unpacifist counterparts, are quite aware that violence already exists as an integral component in the execution of state policies and requires no provocation; this is a formative basis of their doctrine. What is at issue then cannot be a valid attempt to stave off or even minimize violence per se. Instead, it can only be a conscious effort not to refocus state violence in a such a way that it would directly impact American pacifists themselves. (Churchill, 2007:70)

Ironically this quote by Churchill promotes discomfort as he brings us back to notions of the lengths we will go to to protect our colonial comfort and privilege, supporting what Barker (2010) has pointed out as the crux to becoming an Indigenous ally.

Concepts of guilt and responsibility have been studied for years and varying kinds of guilt have been distinguished with regards to systemic violence.<sup>14</sup> For instance, Karl Jaspers differentiates between criminal guilt, political guilt, moral guilt, and metaphysical guilt. From these distinctions, political guilt becomes most important concerning the issues surrounding the IRS legacy and the topic of this research. Political guilt is defined as the collective responsibility of all citizens for the deeds done by their nation-state (Jasper, 1947: 31).

Jasper (1947) also speaks to the importance of confronting guilt with regards to understanding violent legacies, as in the IRS policy and colonialism in general. He acknowledges the legacy left on family members from various acts and deeds: “We feel something like a co-responsibility for the acts of members of our families...” (Jasper, 1947:79). There are many who would argue with these claims by Jasper, but curiosity ensues to question if there is truth in these notions, specifically with regards to descendants of former IRS staff.

Studies have been done on the way in which German descendants of the Nazi era have experienced the legacy of the Holocaust and perhaps understandings within Canada can be made in linking such histories:

<sup>14</sup>Although imperative to the topic of this research, due to time and complexity of issues, my work here does not attempt to fully address issues of guilt and responsibility. Rather, it seeks to introduce them as potential elements of the IRS burden that Settlers must wrestle with.

Linking these violent histories is, I think, crucial in order to begin serious thinking about a politics of alliance against oppression, genocide, ethnic cleansing and imperialist invasions of other countries. Moreover, it may finally prepare some ground for a political dialogue between people and nations that have emerged from or still belong to the victims of such oppression and those who resist the oppression of others from within colonial or imperial nations. (Schwab, 2004:71)

Although there currently does not exist much literature in Canada looking at how the IRS legacy is being experienced by descendants of former IRS staff, I believe capturing such stories can aid in creating a larger more complete narrative of this legacy; ultimately opening further dialogical space with which to move forward from. If we as Canadians are to actually ‘join in this journey’, it can be understood that there is first a need to confront these uncomfortable areas that remain sequestered in silence:

Obviously, each of us can do the anti-racism, decolonization work, both personally and with others, which is a start in the healing process. But further, perhaps there is a purification ceremony that is ours as EuroAmericans and adapted to us as a sacred way- a way that can serve our transformation. Perhaps our healing, purifying ceremony is to go straight into the fire of confronting these wrongs and then to stay in the heat of doing what it takes to make things right. Sweating in this heat may not signify our demise but our healing and transformation- our rebirth. If we long for our humanity and integrity as a people, which has unfortunately gotten so lost during these centuries in a mad rush for gain, perhaps we can find ways back to it – sacred ways, since healing harms and broken relationships is very sacred. (Breton in McCaslin, 2005:430)

Breton, a scholar on restorative justice practices, has worked in solidarity with Indigenous peoples, writing about the need to decolonize restorative justice. Her words here call for the need to confront such difficult places in order to promote our recovery back to humanity; moving forward towards bettered relations wherever possible.

## **2.1 Methodology:**

The paradigm of this research is from within a critical, ‘Settler’ decolonizing, qualitative framework. Stemming from Regan’s “unsettling pedagogy”, I use narrative<sup>15</sup> methodology

<sup>15</sup> During this research process I wrestled with the similarities and differences between the terms narrative, truth-telling, and storytelling and their usage. All of the terms can inherently have differences in meaning. For the purposes of this work, I will be using the terms ‘narrative’, ‘story’, and ‘truths’ interchangeably, both are meant to convey the capturing of experiences as within the tenets of narrative methodology laid out here.

within a decolonizing framework as a means to “not just theorize about decolonizing and liberatory struggle: [but to] experience it, beginning with [myself] as [an individual] and then [as a] morally and ethically responsible socio-political [actor] in Canadian society.” (Regan, 2010: 24) Specifically, I used narration by way of my own auto-ethnography, as researcher, and the individual narratives of two participants, Michael and Dr. Victoria Freeman.

I chose to work from a narrative methodology based on the ability that it has to create a space for which the participants could share their experiences in a way that could shed light on deeper cultural and societal patterns (Fraser, 2004). As Patton conveys “[t]he central idea of narrative analysis is that stories and narratives offer especially translucent windows into cultural and social meanings” (Patton, 2002:116). Given the fact that the experiences of descendants had not been captured in great detail to date, I felt that a narrative methodology would support such a platform, in collaboration with a decolonizing framework. The core tenets of the narrative methodology used in this research were based on Heather Fraser’s (2004) “Doing Narrative Research” and are outlined in the ‘Methods’ and ‘Capturing Experiences’ sections of this thesis.

Currently, performing research within a decolonization framework, specifically with regards to the Settler population, is somewhat of an emerging field, and for this reason I found it in many ways challenging to navigate. In my challenge, I still felt it was very important to apply whatever current knowledge does exist from the realm of Settler decolonization within my research process. In my struggle to define a decolonizing framework, I came to understand that decolonization starts with me and my ability to question the cultural, theoretical, and methodological traditions that define Western research. As Barker conveys “...we [Settlers] must question literally everything we do, all of the assumptions which underpin our personal lives and larger societies, and the myths which inform our very identities” (Barker, 2010:321). Maori

scholar Linda Tuhiwai Smith points out that much of Western research continues to exploit and re-victimize individuals and whole communities (Smith, 1999). Absolon and Willett (2005), note that although Indigenous methodologies speak primarily to Indigenous researchers, it does not preclude non-Indigenous from learning from such frameworks. For instance, Corntassel, Chaw-win-is and T'lakwadzi (2010) pointed out the inherent colonial flaws with some of Canada's TRC reconciliation processes, as well as the Commission's lack of inclusion of Indigenous storytelling methods. Qwul'sih'yah'maht (Robina Thomas, 2005) offers much in the way of understanding storytelling from within an Indigenous traditional perspective and how it differs from 'Western' concepts of 'truth-telling' (Qwul'sih'yah'maht (Robina Thomas), 2005).

From within my Settler mind, I wanted to learn from and honour such traditions, as they offer much in the way of understanding storytelling as a methodology and process. Furthermore, I desired to learn from such traditions in order to better understand my own Western traditions and the potential continued harmful, colonial pitfalls that can still continue to present themselves. I have found great decolonizing lessons for myself in the face of such traditions. Having said this, in light of years of appropriation of Indigenous ways of life by those within my tradition, I also desire to respect the needed boundaries of such work. For this reason, I came to see that the healthiest way for me to work from within a decolonization framework was to recognize the values that I reflected as a Settler, which may also be resonated within some of the Indigenous methodology as well. Rather than attempting to work from Indigenous methodologies, I worked from values that were inherent for me, which were also reflected in Indigenous decolonizing work that I found. These values related to themes of 'The Relational, and The Collective' as found in Kovach (2005:30). 'The Relational' involves the "philosophical premise of take what you need (and only what you need), give back, and offer thanks [as] a deep respect for other

living beings” (Kovach, 2005:30). This aspect of Indigenous methodology “honours the cultural value of relationship, it emphasizes people’s ability to shape and change their own destiny, and it is respectful” (Kovach, 2005: 30). ‘The Collective’ is one of the most important methodological themes:

Western research tends to be individualistic with the principal research defining the question, determining the participants, designing the methodologies, documenting the findings, and publishing the report...Indigenous researchers are equally subjected to this system, but we can only get so far before we see the face- our Elder cleaning fish, our sister living on the edge in East Vancouver...and hear a voice whispering “Are you helping us? (Kovach, 2005:30)

As in the above quote, I deeply resonated with the needed accountability and humanization process of seeing the faces of actual people, family and friends that my work might be speaking to.

Working from a decolonizing approach within a narrative methodology, I facilitated the narrative process as a sharing process rather than with predetermined closed questions resulting in yes and no responses. Instead, I came to the narrative session with guiding open-ended question such as ‘How do you relate..., How do you see yourself...’ and sought to allow participants to discuss what they desired in hopes of joining with them on the journey of their particular story. The sample narrative questions were formatted to open the dialogue of experience rather than to come to a set conclusion predetermined by myself as the researcher.<sup>16</sup>

Auto-ethnography was used as it was crucial to situate myself within this type of research topic so as to confront the unsettling notions of my own power and privilege that I might bring to the research. I used auto-ethnography based on Maynes, Pierce & Laslett’s (2008) premise:

...These [auto-ethnographer] scholars are interested in narratives of self-inscription, but rather than studying the “other” they write critical ethnographies of themselves, or themselves in relation to others. Informed by developments in postmodern, feminist, and postcolonial theory and methods, auto-ethnographers build on recent reconsiderations of the uses and meanings of personal narratives to examine the ways in which selves and social forms are culturally

<sup>16</sup>Please see sample interview questions provided to participants in Appendix B

constituted through biographical genres...[They] reject the search for universal and objective “truths” in favour of the personal and the subjective...What makes these works distinct from an auto-biography or a life history is that narrator’s attempt to turn the ethnographic gaze on his or her own life and work. In this respect...auto/ethnographers are at once narrator and analyst (Maynes, Pierce & Laslett, as seen in Regan 2010:30).

Just as I sought to understand how the narrative process could contribute to the various participants, as an intergenerational Settler, it was crucial to legitimize the process with my own narrative as part of the research. Again drawing from Regan’s work, naming my Settler privilege and how decolonization threatens such a position, allowed for a continued challenge of the way in which “the colonizer unconsciously reasserts herself” (Regan, 2010: 27). Rather than focusing the *gaze* purely outside, in understanding my own biases and lived burden of the IRS legacy, I hoped to enrich the learning process within this research by calling my own humanity as the researcher into question. Regan points out: “Settler stories as counter-narratives that create decolonizing space are both interior and relational. As such, they require us to risk revealing ourselves as vulnerable “not knower’s” who are willing to examine our dual positions as colonizer-perpetrators and colonizer-allies” (Regan, 2010:28). With regards to truth-telling, support for using a narrative methodology also came from conflict theorists such as John Paul Lederach’s (2005) discussion on narratives as a means for recovery of deep societal trauma and as a peace-building tool.

## 2.2 Methods

I used a participatory and collaborative method of in-depth, open interviewing within the framework of a qualitative narrative methodology. I feel it is important to convey the struggle that I felt with regards to choosing a methodology and method right for this research process. This struggle rested on the hinges of what decolonization research looks like from a Settler perspective; when you take the colonization out of the colonizer, what remains? Heather Fraser offers some comfort with regards to working within the narrative framework:

...we [narrative researchers] may be compared to travellers who embark on a journey and who try to use maps and compasses. Looking for signposts but not always finding them, we are often challenged by the ‘forks in the road’ or the ‘crossroads’ that may appear before us (Fraser, 2004:6).

Working within a narrative methodology, I used Fraser’s method of interviewing as laid out in *Doing Narrative Research* (Fraser, 2004). Fraser conveys the importance that interviewing can contribute to the change process: “By entering into dialogue with others, narrative interviewers may unearth hidden or subordinated ideas...In turn, the ‘findings’ produced may lead to the development of new theories that resonate more with people’s lives”(Fraser, 2004:7).

The work was participatory in nature in that the framework attempted to allow participants to be in control of their own stories and process by facilitating their truths as they felt comfortable to share them. The process aimed to be collaborative through facilitating the interviews with open-ended questions and/or guided topics. The process was more about capturing the individual truths as participants chose to tell it within a conversational style, rather than dictating the process within an investigatory type of interviewing. The participants were informed prior to the interview process that my expectations were to understand the truths of their narrative related to the legacy of the IRS system. It was understood that I might have asked open questions at points in order to facilitate the space for sharing. In order to maintain a collaborative approach, any and all information and conclusions made by myself in the findings section were submitted to participants in order to verify and confirm that what I captured resonated for those involved. Expressed consent was needed by both participants in order for any findings to be published.

I attempted to prepare for the interviews by reviewing literature looking at current discourses surrounding the IRS legacy and accounts by staff members (Regan 2010; Chambers,

2003; Freeman, 2000). I also read through studies looking at descendants of those involved in other oppressive regimes.

During the narrative process, I challenged myself to always remain aware of the variance of communication styles between the two participants. For instance, very quickly I noted that one participant seemed more comfortable if I posed some of the guideposts questions to focus their talking, while the other seemed quite comfortable with a ‘free-flow’ style in their talking. Looking back, in both narrative sessions, I wonder what it would have been like had I not asked any questions and simply allowed the participants to share what, if anything they desired. I was able to see later on that rather than promoting the space for these stories to come forward, I was in many ways, exposing these difficult experiences. The difference between these two words of ‘promoting’ and ‘exposing’, as well as the implications of this difference, potentially influenced the way the participants shared their experiences. On this note, one of Fraser’s key points for the narrative process is to “avoid ‘mining’ interviewees for information or ‘cross-examining’ them” (Fraser, 2004:7) and based on the above complexities, I found it a challenge to navigate the difference between ‘mining’, and asking questions in order to join with the participants in our exploration of these topics.

In attempts to honour Fraser’s “facilitat[ing] a climate of trust” (Fraser, 2004:7), I attempted to remain transparent in all of my engagements with the participants. I was mindful of the time frames of the participants to share their stories and also the potential emotional triggering that might have occurred. Throughout the interview process, I strived to promote the entire process to be largely in the hands of the participants, both with the scheduling of the sessions, and with how much they desired to share. I provided the confidentiality form pre-interview and went through it with both of them at the beginning of the interview process. One

way I attempted to facilitate trust in this process was to reveal my own “investment in the research” to the participants (Fraser, 2004:7). This being said, I struggled with balancing how much to reveal being that I also felt it was important to give as much time as possible for the participants to share. For instance, I did not speak to the participants about my previous involvement with a faith community and mission work. This is largely because this history was something that I had left behind, and it was not until after analyzing the work that I came to understand the deep links between this topic and my own faith background. Also, I recognized that both participants were quite busy in their work and daily lives and again, wanted to be cognisant of how much time I was taking up with this difficult topic.

Another point of Fraser’s is to “share some of the interpretations we make; and, appreciate the politics involved with making knowledge” (Fraser, 2004:7). It was very important, albeit terrifying, to gain the feedback of the participants of some of my interpretations of their narratives. Operating from within a decolonizing spirit, this ‘checking in’ with the participants, as well as my thesis committee, continually allowed me to appreciate the politics involved in the meaning-making of the entire research process.

Recruitment of participants was a delicate process given the sensitive nature of this topic. I desired to recruit participants in the most ethically way possible, taking into consideration anonymity and sensitivity of climate. As per the University of Victoria’s Human Research and Ethics Board’s requirements, recruitment of participants was to be done through a tear-away advertisement outlining the research topic and call for participants. In an attempt to uphold the confidentiality of participants, the advertisements were made in tear-away fashion so individuals could call me directly without having to go through a third person. The participants were required to self-identify with the following criteria:

1. Be a descendent of a former IRS staff,
2. Be non-Indigenous, and
3. Be age 19 or above.

Advertisements were to be sent to various organizations including churches and campuses to be posted. In all honesty, throughout the recruitment process, I felt conflicted about recruiting via advertisement of posters. Being that the topic is such a sensitive subject, I felt that in some ways the advertisement poster seemed somewhat cold and distant in light of the deeply personal topic it was discussing. As a result, I did not end up advertising the poster in many of the various public places I had initially anticipated.

Initially, I was hoping to interview five participants; however due to time constraints and my hesitation with recruitment, only two participants came forward. Interestingly, I did not connect with the two participants via the advertisements. One approached me after hearing the topic that I was seeking to look into, and the other had already publically come forward as a descendent of a former staff so I approached her based on HREB's approval. Due to the sensitivity of this topic, in retrospect, I am unsure as to how successful recruiting of participants for this type of work might be through poster advertisements.

For any future research, it would seem that word of mouth or 'snowball' sampling could be a better avenue for recruitment, as throughout the process many who found out about my work approached me saying they knew of someone who fit the criteria who might have been interested in participating. This being said, two participants gave ample amount of rich space and time for which to share their experiences. I found I learned how to better implement Fraser's (2004) key points after having facilitated the first interview. Through the transcription process, it was important for me to hear that I was able to mostly accomplish my set out desire to only ask

clarifying questions to the participants. I attempted to be open to the uniqueness of each participant with regards to facilitating the sessions. One participant seemed much more open to expressing their emotions, while the other seemed more private and less involved with the emotional components.

In an attempt to facilitate a space for personal narratives, I recognized that potentially some or all of the narratives may have conflicted with various others truths related to the IRS legacy. As Regan points out, “Truth...is not a singular, objective, or absolute: it is multiple, subjective, and power-differentiated” (Regan, 2010:62). It was crucial then, to recognize that as with Regan (2010), seeing part of the Settler identity to often live within a sense of ‘historic amnesia’, participants may or may not have resonated with the truths shared by IRS Survivors. To avoid an environment of debate, it was important to state that the purpose of this work was not to in any way dispute or deny IRS Survivor’s experiences. During my work with the TRC and throughout my personal life, I continue to be confronted with those whose truth states that the IRS legacy was not ‘that bad’, or offering that one feels a sense of empathy for IRS survivors, rather than a personal responsibility or connection. This was intriguing to me and made me curious about who feels such a connection, and the importance around this. I have come to learn that denial is potentially a part of the IRS burden for many Settlers, including myself; we are what we are taught and perhaps we have never thought to question our piece or story in this legacy. This being said, it was important for me to promote a space where the participant’s could express a variance of experiences.

It becomes important here to note that there is a danger in sitting with entrenched positions or truths. As Regan points out “Circular arguments over who is guilty and who is innocent are not constructive. Reassessing our shared history in light of new understanding

invites us to work with complexity, intersubjectivity, and multiplicity in ways that avoid binary thinking” (Regan, 2010:67). Both participants involved came to the work supportive and quite knowledgeable of the issues involved and likely for this reason, I did not encounter any resistance or debate around IRS Survivor truths. In the limitation section, I speak to the obvious limitations in findings being that the participants were from a particular background of knowledge and experience with the IRS history. The experiences from participants without this similar background knowledge and experiences would potentially have been quite different, and this is an important factor that should be considered.

Aware that I did require a means for drawing conclusions of the various narratives for the proposed research questions, I gave some key background content for this research to the participants prior to the interview. This content included the section of Prime Minister Harper’s Apology regarding the IRS burden and the research questions that were driving this work.<sup>17</sup> Also prior to the interview process, I conducted a pre-interview either by email or phone to discuss the interview process with each participant; what the session was anticipated to look like, and expected time frame. The interview process included both a formal consent form to be signed by both participants, as well as an informal verbal consent of approval pre-interview by both participants of their comfort with the proposed process.

I documented my auto-ethnographical narrative of my own felt legacy. I then combined both the interviews and my own personal experience to attempt to provide a collective understanding of the Intergenerational IRS Settler legacy specific to this work.

I desired to give the participants’ narratives as much space within my findings section as possible being that there has been no documented record of such experiences to date aside from

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<sup>17</sup>Please see Appendix A

Dr. Freeman's book (Freeman, 2000). It is important to note that due to the limited number of participants the findings in this work are not meant in any way to generalize the experiences found here as similar for all Settlers or descendants of former IRS staff here in Canada. Instead, this work stands as a starting point, or an introductory collective of experiences.

### **2.3 Data Sources:**

I gathered any and all data through a relational, participatory, and decolonization approach, but again, found it difficult to articulate exactly what such data sourcing/coding would look like from such a Settler decolonizing framework. Again, I believe much coding and sourcing has operated from within a colonial perspective to date with objectifying and infusing one's own values onto the participants of research. As a result, I wrestled with deciding which avenue was best to both collect and analyze the information that I received from participants. Even the word 'analyze' seemed to me to depict a dangerous colonial mentality. In the Merriam-Webster dictionary, the word 'analyze' is defined as: "to subject to scientific or grammatical analysis" (Merriam-Webster Inc. 2011).

The notion of separating parts from its collective whole in order to gain an external interpretation was dangerous terrain for me as it could push myself as researcher to the forefront of this work. Although I recognized that coding within a qualitative framework is a valid source of obtaining desired information, in the spirit of decolonization, I remained hesitant to utilize any analyzing source that would lead to the disempowerment, othering, and objectification of the participants in this study. With this disclaimer in mind, I came to understand that the decolonization process is more about the ontology of spirit or the attitude of the researcher, than the research tools themselves. In this sense any method is simply a tool wielded by the researcher:

Upon reviewing many publications that we consider to be exemplars of decolonizing research, as well as research methods and methodology, it has become apparently clear that what makes decolonizing research decolonizing is not an adherence to a specific research method or methodology. Decolonizing research does not constitute a single agreed-upon set of guidelines or methods, although several indigenous scholars have offered lists of minimal criteria to be met. Furthermore, decolonizing research does not have a common definition. ..the distinctive hallmarks of decolonizing research lie in the motives, concerns, and knowledge brought to the research process...Furthermore, we would argue that decolonizing research is performative-it is enmeshed in activism (Swadener & Mutua as seen in Smith. et al. 2008: 33).

With this always in mind, one narrative session was done in person, and the other through the use of Skype. Data collection was done using an in-depth, open interview style based on Fraser's seven phases of narrative research and analysis and 'questions to consider' (Fraser, 2004). Fraser's seven research/analysis phases that I used were as follows:

*Phase One: Hearing the stories, experiencing each other's emotions (Fraser, 2004:186):*

In this phase, in order to avoid over-intellectualizing the personal stories, I strived to also capture the emotions of the participants present within each narrative. Such location included making notes of any emotion captured during the narrative sessions, as well as inserting the heard emotions into the written transcript of both participants' narratives. Aware of misperceptions, I had both participants go through their transcriptions and confirm such perceptions. I also noted the 'sense' that I got from both interview session, including similarities and differences between the two. In an attempt to humanize myself as the researcher, I also noted my own emotions, feelings and insights before and after both narrative session.

*Phase Two: Transcribing the material (Fraser, 2004:187):* For the purposes of this work, I opted to transcribe both narrative sessions word for word. As Fraser mentions, transcribing the material yourself allowed me to become deeply acquainted with the stories, which made it easier to locate various meanings and themes (Fraser, 2004:187).

*Phase Three: Interpreting individual transcripts (Fraser, 2004:189):* During this phase I worked to break down the larger narratives into smaller thematic stories or sections by going through

each line and locating the ‘beginning’ and ‘end’ of each themed narrative. I attempted to locate the various themes within each narrative, looking for any emphasized words, as well as for the ‘main points’ of each section. I then titled each smaller narrative based on the ‘main point’ or theme of the section; often the titles were adapted from actual words or phrases within each smaller narrative section.

*Phase Four: Scanning across different domains of experience (Fraser, 2004:191):* In this phase, based on Fraser (2004), I attempted to pay attention to the intrapersonal, interpersonal, structural and cultural aspects of experience in each narrative. This meant colour-coding the stories related to self, to others, and to the broader society and then going through them to look for connecting features. In this way I was able to better distinguish the various themes within the stories.

*Phase Five: Linking ‘the personal with the political’ (Fraser, 2004:193):* In this section, I looked for the common discourses present within each narrative, posing the question “[w]hat relationship do these stories have to particular discourses?” (Fraser, 2004:193). It was here that I then attempted to link the personal experiences with various discourses mentioned within the literature review. In some cases the links were easily made and in others, I found it to be a bit more of a challenge being that there has not been much written in the way of capturing Settler descendent experiences. Also, I struggled with this phase being that I often wrestled with a desire to allow the experiences to stand alone, outside of my analysis. This was mostly due to the fact that the experiences were so personal, and also that I was cognisant of my ‘gaze’ as the researcher and not wanting to generalize or objectify the participants.

*Phase Six: Looking for commonalities and differences among participants (Fraser, 2004:195):* In analyzing the narratives, once I coded each narrative as in Phase Four, I then was able to see patterns between both the participants’ narratives with regards to the themes. For instance, three

common themes that emerged within the analysis were 1) the discussion around (although at different lengths) family members role and work within the IRS, as well as their own personal understanding of their role and work within their life with relation to this connection. 2) The participants discussed the ideals and beliefs of themselves and what they understood of their family member behind such work, and 3) they both discussed their personal experience and what they understood their family members experience was with the IRS system. Within these three broad themes, smaller themes emerged that illustrated the differences between both participants' feelings and experiences.

*Phase Seven: Writing academic narratives about personal stories (Fraser, 2004: 195):* In this section, I took the narratives and sub-stories that I had located and attempted to fit them into the broader story of the IRS legacy. I asked myself whether or not the narratives and analysis that I had captured gave meaning and response to the original research question posed in this study. Thankfully, as the questions posed in this study were quite broad, and in many ways simply attempting to capture the experiences of Settler descendants, the information gathered was in itself an answer to the questions posed. The analysis allowed me to illustrate not just that a legacy was being felt by the participants, but *how* it was being felt. I was also able to include myself in this process as a Settler Canadian and to see the similarities and differences of experience. In attempts to be respectful and with a desire to have the participants be part of this process as much as possible, I asked them to read through the analysed sections to confirm that I had captured their experiences correctly and to get their feedback.

Audio recordings of the interviews were done with the written permission of each individual participant. Each interview was then transcribed word for word and I sent each written transcription to the participants for their approval and input, verifying that they were comfortable

going forward with what they had shared. I then began coding the narratives based on Fraser's (2004) analysis process by colour coding the various phrases for contextual themes. Some individual sub-stories illustrated similar themes, and in this case, for length restrictions of this work, I chose to present the story that seemed to best represent that particular theme. I also analyzed my own ethnography alongside the participant's themes and was able to find that there were some interesting parallels of experience despite my not being a descendent of a former IRS staff.

Once I had chosen all of the stories needed to illustrate the various themes, I sent the individual participant sections to them for approval of use, and content and meaning. This initial review did not include my own comments, rather their individual sub-stories. In each request for revision, aware of the sensitivity of topic, I conveyed that revision was not a requirement for the participants if they did not feel comfortable, but that I desired it mostly to maintain a collaborative and open process. It was important to me to verify that I was accurately representing what they had intended. I also offered to give the audio recordings to both participants, to which both declined. In the review of the highlighted sub-stories, one participant felt comfortable with what they had shared stating that they 'stood by what they had said', while the other felt uncomfortable with what they had shared due to issues of confidentiality and anonymity, and opted to remove portions of their narrative.

Cognisant of the sensitivity around the subject matter, I desired to limit the number of reviews by the participants. There was also the issue of confidentiality and awareness that the information presented here would be made public. Using Fraser's narrative analysis (Fraser, 2004), I decided that the best representation of each participant's voice was to situate him or her within the broader thematic story titles that were found during my analysis. Due to the highly

sensitive nature of this topic, there were limitations of this study in order to protect the anonymity of the participants; however, although both participants were told that the research process would uphold their anonymity, Dr. Victoria Freeman felt comfortable to be identified being that she had previously publically spoken about some of her experiences. Although Dr. Freeman was comfortable being identified in this process, it was found ethically important to omit or alter any information that spoke directly of someone else's experiences that she might have shared, unless such information had been publically spoken of previously.

In the case of the other participant, Michael, any identifying information that he did not feel comfortable sharing publically was either altered or omitted. This information might have included specifics about the location of the IRS school, the job titles of family members, etc. In some cases, it was not necessarily known by myself as researcher why either participant might have felt uncomfortable publically airing certain information. Out of respect for their privacy and process, I just worked to include only the information they were both comfortable with in order to protect the confidentiality and maintain a climate of trust. For instance, after some revisions were made on the first draft of the thematic analysis, upon reviewing again, Michael expressed he felt uncomfortable with much of the information that had shared to be made public based on the issue of remaining anonymous. As such he opted to take out sections of the highlighted stories of the analyzed work. I decided to take out significant portions of the analyzed stories originally represented based on protecting his anonymity. In attempts to protect the overall anonymity of Michael, and both participants' family members, some aspects of the participants' stories were altered, and or omitted. For brevity's sake, I also omitted my voice and any um's or ah's in the narrative transcript of the participant. This aside, the overall sections of narratives remain intact to their original version.

The experience of difference between the two participants in their comfort in sharing illustrates the complexity of this topic and the burden of this legacy that Settlers must battle. Michael, despite desiring to take out large sections of his narrative, very much supported the work that I was doing and desired to be a part of it; however, when it came to issues of anonymity both for the participant and his family, there was complexity, which I deeply understood.<sup>18</sup>

During this process, I came to see that much of the ostensible narrative work done in other countries dealing with systemic injustices often did not provide much in the way of analysis as it was important to allow the stories to represent themselves. Similarly, I found it quite difficult to analyze the narratives of the participants. Initially, I thought about not doing an analysis, but simply presenting the narratives as they were. As previously mentioned, I felt quite conflicted about injecting my ‘gaze’ onto these very personal experiences; however, after consultation with my supervisors, I began to see that simply representing the narratives would not ultimately inform the deeper questions this work set out to answer. It is from this that I attempted to piece together an understanding of the ways in which the IRS legacy is being experienced by these individuals. Furthermore, in my desire to work collaboratively and in a participatory framework, I continually sought to gain feedback of all findings from both participants, by submitting drafts of the use of their story in the analysis to the participants for their approval and input. Recognizing that the potential triggering that could occur for participants in having to reread their narratives, I also continually stated that they were not obligated to provide edits if at any point they desired not to. In both cases, the participants had no issue with reviewing the work.

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<sup>18</sup>This theme will be addressed more fully in the findings section.

I also used my personal auto-ethnography throughout the research process to contribute to the data gathered. Again, using qualitative data coding/analysis based on Fraser's model, I looked for themes relating to a shared experience of the IRS legacy. I described what the process was like for me in relation to Lederach's notion of how narratives are important for humanization (Lederach, 2005).

At the end of the research process I anticipated that I would be able to identify the overarching themes among these data sources, opening the dialogue that perhaps a broader intergenerational legacy of the IRS policy exists for descendants of former IRS staff. In the end, I was able to locate such themes and feel I was able to create at least an opening of this dialogue with this work. Nevertheless, the research findings suggest further avenues of research for exploring how the narrative forms of truth-telling inform the process of the needed remembering and re-storying (Regan, 2010), with regards to the sensitive aspects of the IRS policy.

### **Chapter 3: Ethical Considerations**

Due to the highly sensitive nature of this research topic, I have had to consider carefully the various ethical issues surrounding this work. In the section 'Important Concerns' I have outlined much of these considerations already. As it can be imagined, there was a great challenge in walking a fine line of respect for all parties involved in the research process; I worked to respect all parties, while striving to obtain a more complete story, while not doing more damage to Indigenous people than has already happened. As part of this consideration process, I gained approval for this work by the University of Victoria's Human Research and Ethics Board (HREB), including two separate amendments that were made based on changes that occurred throughout the research process.

As mentioned previously, in order to maintain the required balance of perspective to ‘do no harm’, it was important for both myself and the HREB that I have the council of an Indigenous person(s) to mitigate any risk for further damage. One aspect that I wrestled with during this process was whether or not I should have somehow tried to include an Indigenous voice with regards to the analysis and findings. Chambers (2003) attempted to provide this type of environment of promoting dialogue in her work of capturing IRS staff experiences through her use of an Indigenous advisory group; however, Chambers herself conveyed some issues around her decision to include this in her work. This being said, it was still important for me to be continually respectful of the Indigenous IRS legacy and historic colonial practices of silencing the Indigenous voice. There was initially consideration around creating an Indigenous advisory committee; however, it was decided, upon the advice of my supervisors, that as the research process could potentially be re-triggering for such members, such a committee may not be best for this particular topic. Both my supervisors, one an intergenerational Survivor herself, agreed that they would take responsibility to provide guidance and advice through the process to mitigate any issues of harm that might have potentially come up. I also had an informal advisory of perspectives from my various friends, family and the participants.

As this research attempted to capture the experiences found in the Canadian Settler group of those closely tied to former IRS staff, and I have attempted to be continually aware of potential emotional harms that could occur in discussing such sensitive topics. These harms included impact on IRS Survivors, and family members, as well as the family members of the participants. For the interview process, I provided consent forms to each participant outlining confidentiality, the work and expectations. Participants were told the process would be confidential and uphold both their and their family’s anonymity. Any identifying information of

either the participant or their family was either omitted or altered for anonymity purposes. This consideration, although important, led to some difficulty around how to best represent the participant's story, while omitting and altering sections that required it.

### **3.1 Limitations of Research:**

This research is limited in scope by looking at intergenerational Settler descendants of former IRS staff during the Canadian Indian Residential School System era of the 1870's up until present day. As such, the focus was particularly on Canadian non-Indigenous descendants of former IRS staff.

As previously mentioned, this research was also limited by participant numbers, which ultimately narrowed the ability to compare and contrast any themes experienced by other Settler descendants of former staff. As the two participants in the research both came from a similar place of support and knowledge of the topics discussed here, it is important to note the limitations of a variance of perspective.

This research did not address the experiences of descendants of former Indigenous IRS staff. To be sure, it is expected that these experiences may be quite different than those represented here and also an invaluable narrative to contribute to the dialogue. Such experiences are outlined as 'further research' in the findings section of this thesis.

This research was also limited by timelines and deadlines for recruiting and facilitating interviews in order to reach my required thesis defence deadline. As mentioned previously, this contributed to choosing to work with the two participants instead of seeking out more participants once a certain deadline passed. It is important to note the limitations of conveying experience and perspective based on only having two descendants' experiences. It is especially important to consider the similarities of experiences that both participants came from. For

instance, both expressed how their family members were bothered by some or all of the issues they witnessed in the schools. As such, the perspective of someone whose family member was either not aware or did not sense any issues, would potentially offer an entirely different capturing of the IRS legacy. For this reason, there is a real limitation in the variance of experiences, and so it is important to note that this work is not in any way meant as a generalization for all descendants, but rather seeks to be more of an introduction to this subject.

Although the research involved discussion around the various religious organizations affiliated with the IRS system, the research did not attempt to address issues around religion found in conflict during the IRS legacy. Again, this is work that could offer much in the way of understanding and moving through this conflict so it is listed as further research as well.

## **Chapter 4: Findings and Analysis**

*It is a weighty thing to sit in judgement upon one's ancestors, the very people who begat you. It is all too easy to simply condemn them or laugh at their ignorance, as our own descendants may do to us. I did not want to be like an adolescent who suddenly discovers all his parents' faults and contemptuously disowns them, without recognizing either what they have given him or acknowledging how much he is like them. I have wondered how one could honour one's ancestors and at the same time explore their role in colonizing this continent, recognizing their faults, both personal and cultural, and acknowledging the impacts of their actions on the original people of this land. I have tried to see them both as they saw themselves, to the best of my ability, and from this present perspective, as an outsider, seeing them as they could not see themselves. I have tried to view their lives with love, respect and honest scrutiny. (Freeman, 2000: xxiv)*

The fourteen themes presented here represent the experiences of two non-Indigenous descendants, Dr. Victoria Freeman and Michael<sup>19</sup>. The themes here also represent the similar topics found within my own auto-ethnography during the research process. I will be introducing both myself and the two participants here as it is these personal experiences that form the basis of the narrative analysis within the themes. The thematic analysis follows after the introductions of the participants. As mentioned, this study was meant to attempt to open dialogue by

<sup>19</sup> Name changed to protect anonymity.

conveying the experiences of these two particular descendants. The sharing presented under each theme also illustrates the differences of how the two participants, and myself, related to the themes.

**Michael:**

Michael's mother worked at a residential school in the mid-1960s for around two years as a teacher's aide prior to marrying and having children. Michael was raised aware of this work done by his mother, and the notion of residential schools. As a child, he struggled in many ways with listening to his mother's experiences at the school. These stories included his mother witnessing the physical and mental abuse of the children. According to him, she had not been in support of the treatment of the children in the school, and was unrequited in her attempts to see things change at that time. It was not until later into his teenage years that a shift occurred for Michael and he began to understand and support the reasoning for his mother's frustration with such experiences. As an adult, he appreciates more fully the stories of his mother's time at the school and her desire in speaking out about them. Due to issues of confidentiality, I will not be providing much more identifying information about Michael. He was very willing to be involved in this process and came to this work having done quite a bit of his own delving into the IRS history and issues of colonialism. Although he was open and willing to be involved in the narrative process, his initial thought was that he did not expect that he would get anything out of his sharing being that he already knew his own story. He also expressed that he was not sure how useful his sharing would be to this process. He had never formally shared his experiences in relation to this topic. It was not until after the interview, in an email, that he thanked me for the opportunity and said that to his surprise, he felt he had learned some things through sharing his story with me.

**Dr. Victoria Freeman**

Dr. Victoria Freeman's grandfather worked within the IRS system in the 1920's. She is a well-known academic, activist, and author who has done solidarity work with various Indigenous communities, as well as work on promoting relations between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people. She did not grow up aware that her grandfather was involved in a residential school. It was not until later in her adult years, when she read his memoirs that she became aware that he had worked at an administration level with a residential school. Questioning her family's involvement and history in the broader colonial system, including residential schools, Victoria researched and wrote about this involvement in her book *Distant Relations: How My Ancestors Colonized North America* (Freeman, 2000)

Both Michael and Victoria's relatives lived and worked in two different provinces at two different residential schools.

#### Kim

As mentioned in the situating myself section of this work, I am of Settler heritage and approach this work with several years experience working in solidarity with Indigenous people both in Canada, and abroad. I have worked with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Research Directorate within a student capacity and also interned with the Interim office of the TRC in 2008 prior to its first launch as the Commission. I come to this work with a background in Christian faith, although today I no longer qualify myself as a member of this religion. I do not necessarily remember the exact point that I learned about residential schooling, although I believe it might have been in a book that I read when I was a young teenager. Although I am not a descendent of someone who worked in a residential school (that I am aware of), I found it interesting that many of the themes that surfaced in Victoria's and Michael's sharing were also

found in my own. Although our potential experiences were quite different, much of their shared feelings seemed to resonate with me.

#### **4.1:Residential School Connections**

Both interview sessions began with sharing around what the participants knew about their family member's involvement and experiences with their work in a residential school. Michael began his sharing with what he understood about his mother's motivations for working at the school and her experiences while there. He did not go into detail about her actual work duties.

*...So we're talking early 1960s and [mom] would've been just out of high school and she was... involved with the Church...and was a kind of left wing, civil rights oriented... Christian who thought that working in an Indian Residential School would be a good thing to do, and be a place where she could make a difference. I don't think that...she understood that there was a program of cultural assimilation going on in those schools, except it's also I think and probably important to realize that...a kind of rank-and-file everyday person back in 1960 when if you'd ask them what they thought assimilation was, they'd say 'well assimilations' a good thing'. Right? And assimilation of Indigenous people was the official policy of the Saskatchewan CCF when they were in government. Like, assimilation was the progressive position, right? And segregation was the 'un-progressive' position. So I'm kind of reading between the lines, and knowing what I know about her and what I've heard from her, I..she...you know wouldn't put it in terms of assimilation, but as a progressive left-wing Christian what she thought she would be doing at an Indian Residential School was helping Native people...to reach their potential and to become full participants in Canadian society...but I think what a lot of well meaning people associated with that agenda with back then, we would look at today and say "oh my God...those are...that's a horrible thing to do...so that's just a kind of long way of saying that I think she went in there with very noble, altruistic motives, but noble altruism ...probably still is today, but back then especially, I think there's still lot's of kind of casual forms of racism and things like that, and certainly no, you know, not terribly respectful to notions of Indigenous autonomy and all those kinds of things.... "*

Michael shared how he, growing up, repeatedly heard about his mom's experience working in the IRS. He explained how she had no formal training "beyond being a member of the Church, who had some secretarial experience and was interested in these kinds of things." He talked about how much he understood his mom's struggle with what she saw going on in the school and how she dealt with it:

*“she was very, very basically..very very quickly horrified...by the things she saw going on at the school...she complained...she...received several reprimands...from the...and I can’t remember what the names of the authorities that she was reporting, whether it was the principal, or the superintendent or whatever, but...you know...she raised a bit of shit when she was there..”*

He described in detail what he remembered he had heard about his mom’s experience. He mentioned how she witnessed physical and emotional abuse, and her attempts to intervene<sup>20</sup>:

*“... she didn’t get in trouble for any of that kind of stuff [intervening to stop the physical abuse], I think that in some ways there were people up the food chain...so to speak, who didn’t want that going on in their school....but...what really bothered her was just the continual disrespect. As she explains it, it was just a continually disrespectful environment, that the children were just treated continually as sub-human by just about everybody who came in contact with them, that they were like inmates in a jail...That there was...that they weren’t seen, you know, as okay the way they were...they were seen as somehow wrong. And they were made to feel that, they were talked to by teachers and staff just disrespectfully, angrily,..there was kind of continual discipline, punishment going on...”*

*“...she got called to somebody’s office and told that, you know, it wasn’t helpful that she was complaining all the time, about all kinds of things, that if she wanted to continue working there, her employment with the school, she was going to have to...understand the guidelines and purposes of the school and work with them rather than against them....But you know, she worked there for two or three years, so....right?”*

Victoria: “[talking about grandfather’s role in IRS] So...he wasn’t employed directly by an Indian Residential School, and I’m not sure if he was employed at all in this capacity. He...was a minister, and was appointed the head of the “Indian Committee” as it was called. And....it worked in liaison with [another church organization]...so...which actually ran the school. So what he did...in sort of working with [the organization], he was sort of the person who went in and fired one principal and hired another one and gave him an orientation and introduced him to the communities... and then visited the school...several times over a period of a few years until the church decided to relocate the school...and at that time...he was involved in the preliminary stages to move the school...but because of the union and formation of the [name omitted] Church, which this residential school was not a part of, ah he parted company with the school basically... But he certainly was at the school, and he was monitoring the school, so he was at an administrative level.”

<sup>20</sup> As some of these stories are explicit in nature, I had originally intended to leave them out in respect for IRS Survivors and family. However, later Michael conveys how he felt it is important for Canadians to be faced very ‘viscerally’ with what happened in the schools. For this reason, I have left these sections in.

Unlike Michael, Victoria did not really learn of her grandfather's involvement in a residential school until she was in her adult years so many details were not known, except from the memoirs he left. In researching for her book, Victoria was able to find out more detailed information. Similar to Victoria, my connection to residential schools and the colonial legacy did not become aware to me until later in my life:

*Kim: Close to 10 years ago, I found myself on an Alaskan reservation, at a community gathering apologizing for the history of my ancestors for residential schools, colonization, and the unforgiveable mistreatment of Indigenous peoples. It was one of the most impacting things I will have done in my life. Not the most outspoken person, I struggled to stand in front of this Indigenous community. However at the time I knew that it was something I needed to do. I can't recall to this day, exactly what I said, but I remember sharing how wrong I felt we as settlers were in the abuse, treatment, and broken promises with Indigenous peoples. I did not at the time really understand the complete history of colonization. Standing there, I knew my feeble words were never going to be enough to penetrate the pain that had been caused. I stood there and felt that I needed some weight as my words threatened to fall on the long pile of the already many empty words that had been made by Settlers.*

*In my early 20s mindset, I did the only thing I knew to do. I invited the elders (if they were willing) to come forward and as an act symbolizing the honour and respect that they should always have been given; I wanted to wash their feet. For a moment, you could hear a pin drop it was so quiet and I thought no one would come forward; I was sure I had just made a horrible mistake. To my amazement elders slowly began to come forward, some family helping them, some on their own; slowly I began to wash the feet of these elders. Sadness, anger, hurt, pain, love, respect and honour existed frozen in that moment; I personally will never forget this space.*

*Afterwards, to my uncertainty, people began to come up to me. One woman said tearfully that she had attended a residential school and although had done her own healing work, she realized she still held a lot bitterness and anger towards white people. She felt she was able to let some of that go just having one 'settler' person actually acknowledge this history and apologize for it. Another man came to me and thanked me for my humility and courage to step out and do this. He said that he had been making a birch-bark bowl and that he hadn't known who it was for, but that he knew he it was to give to someone when the time was right. He expressed that he knew it was for me. To this day, I look at that bowl and feel the weight of that moment.*

*Throughout the years, I have told this story to others when I've felt the time/moment was right. I have come to see that this is potentially the crux of the Settler IRS legacy: when is the right time to confront these issues? Why do I feel I have to wait for the 'right' time and feel somehow that I as a Settler have this ability to decipher the timing? It was at this moment that I really came to realize the importance and power of one's identity. I understood that my identity was not just my own, but carried the history of the group that I visually/historically belonged to. Since then, I have come to understand more deeply that more than the historical wrongs, I carry into the present the intergenerational attitudes, ideals and values passed on to me by my*

*ancestors. To be clear, I have come to realize that this is not about wallowing in guilt, self-pity, or self-hatred, but about accepting in critical honesty one's responsibility around inherited and perpetuated violence. It is important to say that I now see the actions of that moment in Alaska in a more critical light than I did when it first happened.*

Although I did not ask directly whether both participants feel they clearly felt the IRS legacy, in their sharing, both conveyed the ways in which their personal connection as a descendent has impacted their lives. Victoria later on expressed very clearly how she felt this personal connection as a descendent has influenced her understanding with regards to issues of guilt and responsibility. It is important here to consider the perspectives of someone whose relative had worked in the IRS system and did not take any issue with the system or their work. I wondered how this perspective might be in relation to Victoria, and Michael's. I was interested to find that although not a descendent, through my work here, I began to feel a deeper connection to the IRS history as a Canadian.

A related sub-theme to the connection to the IRS legacy is the relationship and experience with church communities, which was interestingly a common theme between the participants and myself. Similarly I noted the fact that both of the participants' immediate families chose to part ways with their church roots. I was curious about this, especially having walked away from my own faith tradition.

*Michael: "...and [his mom, after working in the residential school] kind of slowly drifted away from the Church and had less and less to do with organized religion..."*

*"... we would go to church sometimes... kind of at holidays...and some kind of things like that. And then every once and a while for a reason that I couldn't understand...it'd be "We're going to church today." (laughing)..but it was kind of very infrequent...yah yah...and then that stopped by the mid-to late seventies..."*

*Victoria: "...I think my father had turned quite vehemently away from the Church..."*

*Kim: While interning with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC), I was in my last year of my BA at a Christian university and after many years delving into colonial history, my Christian faith was close to being extinguished. I remember interning during the day with the TRC with such amazing people, many of whom were IRS survivors or intergenerational*

*survivors. The stories I heard, I couldn't reconcile with myself and my Christian faith. I realized how easy and dangerous it was to think you were doing 'God's will' all the while perpetuating harm. I began to question: if I had transposed myself back 20 years, could that have been me working in a residential school? How would that have been? I was terrified to answer the question. Although I have done much work around this area and moving forward, I feel such guilt, shame, sadness and anger around this history of mine. I more deeply understand the notion and desire to 'do good' and to 'help', and even more the imperialistic notions that can sometimes occur in religion. But, what I have realized on my own faith journey is that one's faith can, sometimes quietly or sometimes loudly, pervade in the imperialistic attitudes of superiority. This is not to say I am directly attaching a blanket imperialistic attitude over all Christian faiths, to be certain there are as many differing faith practices and beliefs within this title as there are people. As such, I must be careful to not oversimplify this complex issue. Although I was struggling with much of the Christian faith, I did my BA at a Christian University as I desired to more deeply look at this faith. Although Christian, the university professors challenged my faith and made me think through the various beliefs and practices; for this I will be forever grateful.*

*During this time I saw in many faith communities virtually no connection or recognition of the Church's involvement in oppressive, violent and racist acts such as residential schools. When the conversation came up with friends (usually after I invoked it), the responses were typically to say that it was 'those' churches that were a part of that history and that 'our' church would never have been involved; there was no sense of connection to the wrongs that had been committed as a collective community. It is important to note here that I recognize and pay respect to the churches that have come forward to engage with these wrongs with an attempt to take responsibility for historic actions and move towards a changed relationship. I have sat in on some very powerful interfaith dialogue groups with members of various Christian faiths and IRS Survivors present. However, at the back of my mind, given my understanding of the IRS history, I still struggled to wonder where Settler feelings of 'superiority' and imperialism might be lurking.*

The topic of church connections is one that I see as the most sensitive and difficult to illuminate. I see a great need to confront the ways in which the IRS legacy and colonial violence may be permeating some of these traditions; however, I also say this with great caution recognizing those within these practices that are attempting to accept this challenge and move forward in recovery. Later on, Michael discusses how his mom attempted to confront the issues that she had witnessed at the IRS with her church group, but to no avail. I wondered how much of this lack of desire for her church to engage with this history prompted their departure from the tradition.

In the theme of inheriting attitudes I discuss the subject of church relations more in depth.

#### **4.2: Settler Amnesia: Growing up with IRS stories**

A common theme between both Michael and Victoria is that they both either did not know, or could not remember the details of the work that their relative did at the IRS. Victoria later did research on this subject in order to have a more concrete understanding of her grandfather's role in the IRS. They both recalled stories of either residential schools, or their family's connection to Indigenous people in their childhood.

Michael grew up hearing stories of his mom working in the IRS and was very aware of this topic throughout his upbringing. Unlike Victoria, he relates that it was "a topic of conversation that [his mom] would "often go to" and in some ways conveys his frustration with the repeated stories that he had to hear:

*"Yah,..a topic of conversation that [mom] would OFTEN (accent) go to...so like I always knew that my mom had taught at an Indian Residential School...and her anger about the injustice of it was a kind of constant...she would talk about it...to anybody who would care to listen..."*

Interestingly, to Michael even, is that although he heard the stories over and over, he could not recount in detail about what she actually did at the school:

*"It's interesting how I am just accusing her of telling the same stories over and over and over again, but I can't really here....recall to you, kind of great details.... there's more just that...she worked at the Indian Residential School, and there was continual racism meted out to those who were most vulnerable individuals, and nobody cared and she complained, and she complained and she complained, and nobody listened and she got in trouble for it instead...and what does that say about this society...and how could anybody do that...and why does...and then a big part of it is, why then when she went to talk about it, she wanted to talk about it with her church group after she left the school, nobody wanted to talk about it...WHY would nobody ever want to talk about it, what kind of society would never want to talk about these things. That's been a kind of, recurring...kind of motif..."*

*Victoria: "...And I didn't know anything about this until...well I knew about it in two ways. Really he [grandfather] wrote his memoirs in the 1970s and circulated it among his children, and I read his memoirs. But it was really only in the 1990s...that I reread his memoirs...and read the part where he talked about being involved with the school....and I had heard about the school from my father, in a different way, because he, from the time I was a little kid, always told stories about their summer camping trips and their trips on [the location] and...he talked about playing*

*with native children and the native people in the area and how they would get to know them and sometimes my grandfather had good relations with them. Sometimes they would give him moose meat, or something like that.. and...my father talked about playing with these native children, on the dock [of the school]...and he remembered their names....you know all these many, many years later...but I didn't realize, and I don't think he said...not because he was hiding, but maybe because he just didn't even make the connection himself in some ways...that that was the...that was a residential school..."*

In her book, Victoria expresses how she has experienced this colonial history:

*...All my life I've felt burdened by this history, a history I didn't know or understand since it was never taught in school: the history of how my people, the people of European ancestry, came to North America, colonized the inhabitants, and ended up with their land. Growing up as a Canadian child of English-Scottish-Irish heritage in Ottawa in the early 1960's, I never knowingly encountered a living, breathing aboriginal person, though I knew from television news reports that they still lived in Canada, mainly under appalling conditions on reserves. I knew vaguely that whatever had happened in Canada had supposedly happened less brutally than in the United States. I struggled with an amorphous sense of guilt that I sensed many other people in North America shared, but which was never talked about...(Freeman,2000: xiv)*

*Kim: Although I didn't have a relative who worked at an IRS school, I grew up aware of issues of injustice and the desire to bring change. Consequently, I don't remember when I first heard about residential schools in Canada, but I do not remember learning about it in school curriculum. The truths represented here deeply portray the implications of 'settler amnesia' as depicted by Regan (2010) and Freeman (2000). Throughout this work I have had an unsettling feeling of a history living within me, of which I could still be completely unaware. I do not know much about my family's history with relation to Indigenous peoples so can I honestly say I know my connection to residential schools? There is a place of curiosity mixed with apprehension in my desire to know this history; for fear of what I might find.*

Freeman discusses this fear within her book (2000), and later on in her sharing of the research here. Bringing this within a broader Canadian perspective, if those most closely connected to residential schools, such as descendants, do not know the details of this connection, what is the likelihood we can expect general Canadians to understand our connection? These are important questions that I think need to be asked for beginning to honestly journeying together with Indigenous people.

#### **4.3: Indigenous Relations and the Shifting Experience**

Although both participants did not necessarily share similarities in their growing up with an understanding of these schools, they both expressed a commonality in their individual and family relations with Indigenous people. They expressed how these relations eventually in some way contributed to their shift in understanding around colonialism, residential schools and their connection to it.

Michael discussed how his mom stayed friends with several of the children from the IRS she worked at and how her continued work and advocacy in Indigenous communities contributed to his understanding of racism, colonialism etc.

*...She made friends...with kids from the school, friendships that, you know, have continued into...her adult life. She's still in touch with a couple of her students...*

Both participants discuss having shifts in their understanding and the role education and relations with Indigenous people played in their drive for a deeper understanding. They both conveyed having at least two shifts in understanding, one as an initial shift towards grappling with what really happened in the residential schools and colonialism, and the other shift later in light of the IRS students coming forward.

*Michael: "I've always known that native children got sent to residential schools and I didn't understand that it was part of an agenda of cultural assimilation, let alone that it was part of an agenda of land theft, and colonial dispossession and political rule....but I knew that native kids had been given a schooling that wasn't really schooling at all. That was punitive and wrong and disgusting...and that it was part and parcel of shameful treatment towards native people and I couldn't understand why, except that white people are racist. Like, that was as complicated as my analysis got, until you know, late stages of education...and I think it's just a strange coincidence...like ..in school...I was just more and more interested in kind of critical analysis of Canadian society... And that it was just simply, straightforward I guess kind of...I guess the chickens are coming home to roost aren't they?*

*K: What do you mean?*

*M:...that these schools went on, they were horrific...the students who've gone to them...have...come of age as adults...and as part of a generational awakening in Indigenous*

*societies have decided to fight back and try to do something about it....and that was my first kind of take on all of that.*

Michael discusses a second shift in understanding in light of the politicization of residential schools. Looking back on his perspectives Michael related much of his current perspectives to his upbringing and family connection to the issues.

*“...so..you can kind of look back...and I guess...put it in the context of the stuff I’ve told you about my mom and my family, at a very young age, very straightforward, good versus bad orientation.”*

*“..it’s a much more complicated terrain, full of kind of nuances and so....I kind of...you know...relate to it...now a lot more as a kind of cautious student....unsure of the big picture in some ways, and interested to see how things play out.”*

Like Michael, Victoria shares about the good relations her family, including her grandfather, seemed to have with Indigenous people and how it was her own Indigenous relationships that prompted her to better understand her own legacy.

*Victoria: “..I had been doing solidarity work with Indigenous people since the 80’s, the early 80’s. Actually I did a report at the downtown East side women’s centre in Vancouver on racial and sexual discrimination in housing. And even before that, I’d met a Métis writer, at the Banff fine arts school in the 1980’s. And I think that was the beginning of my interest and wanting to engage with that history...then through that project, in the downtown Eastside I saw a lot and also helped to start a feminist literary organization to organize a feminist literary conference in 1983 and that got me curious about aboriginal writers and I ended up working really hard to bring native women writers to that conference and met numerous indigenous women. Like just a whole lot of very strong Indigenous women and from that started doing solidarity work. And so...like all this was in the 80’s and then...I did a number of interviews with [an Indigenous woman] and then did a conference with her...and in doing that and talking with [this woman], I started feeling ‘Ok I’ve been working in support of Indigenous organizations, but they’re getting their own act together, they don’t really need me’ and [this woman] had also said to me...well I asked her what can I do that’s most useful and she said to me, “The most useful thing you can do is to really explore and understand white racism..because we don’t understand and we need to understand it too. So after that..I started being more self-reflexive and also wanting to understand...well I was, I’d also...well...there’s so much history here...but I’d also gone to Africa in the 1980’s and that had really given me a different perspective on colonialism in Canada and I had been working in the women’s movement and had gone through those early struggles of the 3<sup>rd</sup> wave feminism with women of colour around racism and racism in the women’s movement so*

*that made me quite self-reflexive. And as I said in my book, it was really through having a fight with an Indigenous friend of mine where I found myself saying to her ‘well I didn’t ask to be born here’ and then wondering how my ancestors got me here and into this situation and that those were the things that drove me to want to understand my ancestors and my grandfather. And this was well before the Apology and before any kind of real reconciliation movement in Canada. It was really through my own relationships with Indigenous people that I needed to come to understand this...’*

Victoria mentions in her book the way in which her family related to Aboriginal people and later shares in her interview the meaning she’s found in her personal connections with former students of her grandfather’s school. It is here as well that Victoria troubles the ‘helping’ mentality that seems to follow many Settler Canadians.

*“...this one family member...brought me this...funny old pillow. It was knitted...it had a knitted cover on it...and it was made by...an Anishinaabe woman who went to the school who was a great friend of my grandparents and lived with my grandparents when she went to nursing school. And she had knit this pillow...for my grandparents...and...the fact that [Victoria’s relative]...several years later...gave this to me...was a beautiful peace offering...and I use that pillow...you know I have it on my chair...and when I lean back....as I work...it’s supporting me..and it’s just a reminder of the connection, of all the family complexities, because this woman was one of my aunt’s best friends...she lived in my grandparents house...they were very fond of her, but... she also had a really hard life...there’s a sort of complexity to that relationship...the good and the bad...what’s nice is...after writing that book [Distant Relations]...the great niece of that woman...actually ended up living with me...and...we’ve stayed in touch with...she has stayed in touch with me and her children know my children...there’s like a...we’ve re-established a family relationship that goes back to my grandparents that actually came out of that residential school...”*

*“..I realize that there’s one other story I should tell you...and it’s again about doing this work and...when I went to the area where the school had been and was interviewing people and I interviewed [IRS Survivor] who was an elder there and who had gone to the school when my grandfather was there...he was the only person who I had talked to who had gone to the school back in the twenties...and you know...he was in his eighties...and...he told me lots of things and he...when he saw a picture of my grandfather he did remember him...but one of the things that was very striking was...I had told him about a dream I’d had...about an eagle landing on my arm...and flying off and leaving me these two feathers...and in the dream I gave them to a native friend of mine who was going through a rough time...and so he said ‘oh I have to give you an eagle feather’...and he did.. and...I’ve carried that feather ever since...and it’s very meaningful that it came from someone from the school...and then...when I went back...and I gave...a talk...”*

*about the school...one of the Elder's relatives said to me 'well you know, he wouldn't have given you that feather if he didn't think your grandfather was okay.' So...it's just interesting...all the different ways that you can have connection to this history..."*

Victoria discusses the meaning around the connection with the Survivor from the school and to be told that her grandfather was 'okay'. During the interview I wondered what it might mean for her if her relative had been said to be 'not okay' by those in the Indigenous community; would this change her perspective in some way, would it affect the way she approached this history? Later on, in reviewing this work, Victoria conveyed that she had been quite surprised by the fact that this person had said her grandfather was "okay":

*"Some other people did say that [her grandfather was not okay], like a man I interviewed who could hardly look at me and who spat out that "Those Christians taught us to lie, cheat, and steal." I was in fact very surprised when that relative of the elder said that my grandfather must have been okay – I never expected that at all and just assumed that people would be very critical of him...I was also told this long after my book had been published (maybe six years later) so it didn't affect the way I approached the history. I fully recognize that whether or not my grandfather was considered more okay than many of the white people involved in the schools, that doesn't absolve him of his complicity in that destructive system, yet I also recognize the longing to have him be seen as "okay"."*

This being said, wanting to be seen as 'ok' and having 'right' relations with Indigenous people is one that I can very much relate to. Continually in doing the work here I have had to confront my desire to be deemed a 'good' Settler<sup>21</sup> by those Indigenous people around me.

*Kim: I have had various interactions and connection with Indigenous people and groups throughout my life. Growing up in Northern Alberta, I was strikingly aware of the division between those in my Settler community and Indigenous people. Many of my shifts in understanding my colonial history have come from the relationships I have had with various Indigenous people. I recently had a conversation with an Indigenous friend of mine. He was speaking about how he still daily encounters racism and how difficult this is for him. I asked him what he thought about the work I was attempting to do in this thesis and whether he thought I should. He responded that he felt it was important both for myself personally, and for other Canadians, although he is fairly pessimistic about the ability for relations to change. In his words: "I don't believe in hope, but I need hope" that things can be different.*

<sup>21</sup> Notions of 'good' and 'bad' with regards to being a Settler need to be muddied in light of the complexities surrounding non-violence and violence as mentioned earlier in this thesis.

*Resonating with Regan (2010) I have found that continuing to engage with ‘hard’ and uncomfortable spaces, with relation to this colonial violence, has been extremely important for recognizing and recovering from what I now understand as my colonial legacy. An example of this is a course on Indigenous women and resistance that I was allowed to sit in on. It was like holding the colonial ‘mirror’ up to my face again to remind me of my mentalities and attitudes. Participating in the discussions in this course, although extremely hard and challenging, really deepened my understanding of responsibility, guilt, violence and relations. I realized that there was a sense of me wanting to know that I was ‘okay’ and I came to see there was a real need for me to redefine what I understood as violence. Although I have felt burdened by this history and by my ancestors’ actions, I had never really recognized my own violence and complicity within the continuing colonial history. An Indigenous person in the course offered that seeing buildings on his land was violent to him and I came to understand that although I did not make or participate in the historical actions and decisions of Canadians in the past, I am a participant in them today. More than ever I was reminded of the complexities around these issues; I am perpetuating colonial violence by living on unceded land without attempts to alter this, all the while still desiring to have Indigenous people see me as ‘okay’. I realized that as a dominant person in this society, in many cases there is no one to hold me accountable for such actions aside from myself. Curious, I posed this question to some Indigenous people around me; where do I go to be held accountable; can I walk into an RCMP office and tell them I am guilty of colonial violence? Do I go to the reserve near where I grew up and tell them I am guilty of colonial violence and make me pay for such wrongs? The only response I can find here is to convey just how complicated this legacy is. I wonder what it might be like to have those from the very group that oppressed you (while still presently continuing to promote colonial interests in their daily life) approach you for support in recovering from their own legacy. To be clear, I believe that opening dialogue between both settlers and Indigenous peoples is crucial for recovery. However, honestly I can’t imagine how difficult the request is for those who have been harmed by my ‘privilege’ as a Settler, to then choose to be in relationship with the very people who may have harmed them. Would I be able to do the same if the situation was reversed? This is a meaningful question.*

Overall this theme highlights the deep importance and necessity for honest and critical education around the IRS history for all Canadians, as well as the impact that breaking relational divisions might have. Both the participants, and myself, spoke to the shifts in understanding that occurred for them as a result of both education and relations with Indigenous people.

Challenging the ‘Standard Account’ (Chrisjohn and Young, 1997) can be seen as imperative if Canadians are to move forward from the IRS legacy; for carrying the burden that is rightfully ours as Settlers. Although the TRC and many others have called for this education, there still continues to be a lack of implementation in school curricula across the country. Questions

surround how much this is a desire to maintain our colonial ignorance of ‘not knowing’ in order to continue with our status quo of privilege and comfort (Regan, 2010).

#### **4.4: Being the Blacksheep: Challenging the Status Quo**

Both participants shared feelings of different forms of isolation throughout their life and both express notions of being a ‘black sheep’, or how they felt their immediate family had been the black sheep either in their extended family or within society. In this theme, both participants shared in their stories elements of experiencing the *gaze of others* and the impact of this on them personally:

**Michael:** “Well, I think...for me as a kid...it [residential school family history] was just one of the kind of...myriad ways...in which I thought my family was weird...right?...”

“...I certainly remember... I don’t know which Native peoples we were learning about, or whether it was “Natives” in general, but I was asked...and I know this antidote because my dad talks about it...and...he asked me what I learned at school that day, and I said ‘oh we learned about the Natives’... ‘well, what did you learn?’ I said, “well we learned about the religion”. And he said, “Well, where did you get that?” and I said, “Well I wrote it down in my notes straight off the board.” So, he wanted to see my notes, so I had it there to show him...and [the notes conveyed derogatory and inaccurate information] so he contacted the teacher and the teacher’s line of defence was... “This is right out of the teacher’s instructional manual. I’ve got it right here, in black and white. This is what my book is telling me. You know I don’t know what they did. But don’t blame me, blame the ministry... ”...So my dad raised hell...around that with the school board...and I’m not sure what became of it...like did they stop using the book or...did they not use that part anymore, because I’m sure they didn’t want my dad, you know...bothering them all the time about it, but they probably relented, I don’t know...but I know that....the teacher probably didn’t like me before, and the teacher really didn’t like me after. Right? (Laughing)... So there was just another example of my family is...you know, at odds with its surroundings and that’s how, that’s the frame through which I interpreted all this stuff. You know, I kind of resented it, basically...”

Michael later expresses how later on as he grew up, his resentment moved to understanding and support for his parents perspectives in challenging such attitudes:

“...it’s kind of funny because as I got older, you know...the more I realized so my parents are kind of sticking up for unpopular causes and it’s, to some extent, outsiders and rebels, and I kind of found myself, you know...agreeing with them...and kind of respecting them for it. But, no kid

*likes to grow up in a family where people are continually complaining....that's how I....complaining is a mean way of putting it, but you know where people are just continually saying that's wrong, that's wrong, that's wrong...why don't they do this...it's, it's upsetting and wearying. “*

*Victoria: [speaking about her experience now in light of the publicization of the IRS system]...it's great. Because I felt really isolated at the time. Because I didn't know anybody else (any other white people) who cared about this. And I didn't know any other allies... there were little pockets of allies in different parts of the country but they very rarely got together. (A lot of them were members of churches, but I wasn't, so I wasn't connected to them.) A lot of them were isolated from each other. So now there's an explosion of interest...especially among younger people, but also just all throughout...among church people, various kinds of social activists... anti-racist activists...all kinds of people who now are interrogating all of these questions around..you know settler...the colonial situation in Canada, including residential schools. And I think the Truth and Reconciliation Commission has been really great in at least among certain circles...in making people a lot more aware. It's not...I mean there's a huge mass of Canadian public that doesn't pay any attention or know about it, but compared to what it was before, there's been a huge change and a lot less denial than when I was first doing my work.”*

*Victoria...The relatives on my father's side of the family are mostly...were all raised with the United Church and I wasn't. So there's that kind of a divide. My immediate family was kind of the black sheep of the extended family because my father was an economist, not a minister....I think my father had turned quite vehemently away from the Church... ”*

*Kim: Based on my experiences and beliefs around Indigenous-Settler history and present realities, over the last ten years I have become a strong advocate for working alongside Indigenous communities and for promoting education, and understanding in settler communities. In many ways I have felt isolated because I often feel how I live on the margins being that I am not Indigenous, and yet also often do not resonate with mainstream settler discourses on Indigenous peoples. For instance, in higher education settings, I have often challenged or questioned professors if I have felt that the colonial history isn't being represented or the Indigenous voice is not present. This has led to certain professors becoming frustrated with me likely for my indignant inability to let status quo remain. One professor at the prompting of my hand being raised, rolled his eyes and said 'yes Kim, and Indigenous people too...' In this case, I felt incredibly embarrassed, and frustrated.*

#### **4.5: Fear and Self-Disclosure**

Fear was a feeling that was expressed by both participants. Michael expressed it through his apprehension in the gaze of others. He discussed teenage fitting in, and later talked about trepidation around his identity and self-disclosure in relation to sharing about his family

connection with the IRS legacy. Michael and Victoria both expressed the theme of self-disclosure and the pressure around trying to decide when and where to self-disclose; with the potential repercussions of exposing themselves. Victoria chose to, and felt importance around, publicly coming forward as a relative of a former IRS staff member. Michael seemed to value his privacy, taking issue with over personalizing issues. Both recognized the potential importance of being willing to participate in a dialogue with IRS Survivors.

*Michael: "...I'm usually kind of trying to **not** get recognized in the supermarket and all that kind of shit right? ..but...and it's all..I'm a WASP right? We all...there's that kind of a WASP man, kind of a particular age and background have a certain kind of bias against kind of talking about themselves and all that kind of stuff I generally don't... don't do it..."*

*Victoria: "... I went through intense fear about my relative's reactions [to her publically writing about her family history and colonialism] so...it was really hard for the first year or so until I got used to it. It was very scary.*

*Kim: In doing this research, I very much related to the theme of fear. I continually awoke in the middle of the night out of an anxiety of how to respectfully represent the participants, my own experiences, while honouring the need for a critically honest examination of this legacy without doing more harm to Indigenous peoples than has already been done. I also experienced large fear around confronting my own faith background with relation to the IRS legacy and had many conversations with friends who were of this background to discuss these concerns. I deeply love and respect those who ran and worked in the Christian organization that I was with in my years working abroad. To a great extent, my decolonizing journey began as a result of this Indigenous group challenging my Christian worldview and attitudes at that time. Throughout this research process I have deeply struggled with how to balance critically examining and calling into question the colonial mentalities within my own faith tradition as a Settler, while holding the great teachings and health that I have been given from these communities. For this reason, I approached these topics with great fear and trepidation. I experienced great anxiety around the reactions of others, including both participants, as well as the Indigenous community of my work in this thesis.*

The topic of fear is one that is important to consider with regards to the continued silence that encapsulates the IRS legacy. I think back to the RCAP report, which outlined the culture of silence that was seen to exist in the residential school system, and for those who were working in it (RCAP, 2006). Questions should be asked as to the implications for how this culture of silence

might have been enforced, and the subsequent fear that might have existed for those working in the schools to speak out. Today, fear could perhaps also be a factor promoting colonial ignorance based on trepidation of having to wrestle with issues of guilt and responsibility, as well as the subsequent discomfort and call for change that such awareness might bring.

#### **4.6: Settler Connection: Guilt, Grief, Complicity and Responsibility**

One of the guidepost facilitation questions posed to both participants was around relating to feelings of guilt, grief, shame etc. as a relative of someone who worked in the residential school system. Both participants expressed themes around responsibility and accountability. They both related to ways of personal responsibility, as well as collective responsibility.

In relating to guilt, shame, grief, Michael shared about these feelings more as a collective society. He related it to responsibility and expressed that he personally did not feel a sense of shame. When relating to responsibility with regards to his mom and her work in the school Michael did not seem to hold her responsible in light of the colonial attitudes of that time. He situated her within a broader context of the ‘helping’ mentality that permeates through a common colonial attitude:

*“No, no, I don’t hold her[ mom] responsible...I think, that the attitudes that made her think it would be good to work at an Indian Residential School are part of a certain kind of very mid-twentieth century, left liberal, paternalism, that has increasingly been revealed as in some way, misguided, as self serving, as certainly not an appropriate kind of...paradigm or program...for a better society and so that certainly kind of shallow, I’m not sure if racism is the right word, but you know, borderline racism, certain kinds of kind of paternalism, that you still see... (said somewhat angered) that sends white people to Africa like all the time, we have to help them like when cancelling debt and you know (laughing) working on our Government’s here would probably be a better thing to do right?..that kind of missionary Christian kind of impulse, you know I mean it’s kind of better than a lot of the other attitudes and impulses...of the day, but it’s not...it’s certainly not unproblematic.”*

*“ ... It’s not as straight-forward.....the kind of work that I do...or my mom’s interest, which is very much like, let’s get the records, let’s get this exactly straight...who did what. Right?...that*

*kind of focus isn't incompatible with a certain kind of self-interest that wants to...achieve a...purer identity."*

Michael goes on to express his position on individual guilt within the general population: "...*I am quite surprised ...at how much energy...well meaning energy, that is placed on...trying to encourage a kind of diffuse sense of..kind of individual guilt in living non-Native Canadians, right?*

Victoria discussed this theme both from a personal and collective perspective:

*"I talk in my work about how I grew up with an amorphous sense of guilt...that I couldn't really name but it manifested itself as a discomfort...when...you know and it became more obvious when I actually started trying to work with native people....like I could sort of feel a sort of squirminess in myself...and an uncomfortableness...and...but I didn't really know...what did my ancestors do? I didn't know....how was I connected to that? I didn't know... but I kind of felt vaguely they might have been...I was associated with it somehow...and then when I actually did the research about my family, it clarified in some ways...oh yah..they were right in the thick of it...they were doing all these kinds of things, but then what is my relationship to their actions?...and that's true of my grandfather as well...so it became clearer to me that...and with the help of a lot of other thinkers...you know...that...I am accountable for what I do with what I've inherited. I'm accountable for...the situation in the present. And the benefits and privilege that...I...inherited through this colonial process....I'm not responsible for what my ancestors actually did...because I wasn't there and I couldn't make those choices...but I still had a lot of feeling about that and [some expressed to me that they thought the work that I was doing was just promoting a wallowing in guilt] And I thought about it and I realized...well...no...it's actually grief that I feel (said softly...I feel so awful...I feel so sad that this has happened and that my family was involved in it. I feel that there's been such waste and such devastation and...it is awful to know that your family was involved.....you want to feel proud of where you come from...you want to feel proud of your culture and your country, but I couldn't feel those things (said more strongly)...so I think there are still elements of shame...and grief...but the thing about grief is that it's something you can share with indigenous people because they have a lot of grief too...and it is...like it's such a tragedy...what happened (said emotionally)..not just in residential schools, but the whole big mess of it. And it's continuing...it's not over...so...mourning is a process you can move through...and...so...to think about it that way...there's a release in acknowledging what you feel...and you move on to something else and...what you don't want to happen again I guess. And I do feel...as a country...maybe we are guilty...but you know...the whole question of collective guilt is a really difficult one..."*

Victoria further highlights the crux of how she sees the notion of a Settler connection and her own personal connection to this legacy:

*“... I think...we as non-Indigenous people in Canada...have been very loath to admit our connection to this. And it is a very personal connection in many ways because...even if their families weren’t directly involved...they put money into the....collection plate at Church...they contributed to the funds that ran the schools...they supported the schools through the ideologies at work in their churches and their government. It’s much safer to say it’s the Government’s fault, it’s the churches fault...and not see your connection. And I guess I feel fortunate in a way that having a direct connection to it...made it especially clear to me that...in terms of responsibility and accountability it’s a much broader public...”*

*“...Oh there was one other story I was going to say in doing this and why did I go public and all that...it was really difficult as I said and I was very upset by some of the reactions of my family...and at one point a friend...an indigenous friend of mine...knew I was really upset and she brought me a gift...which was...tobacco...from South Dakota...which she had had for about 10 years...and it was a really precious and meaningful gift...and she gave it to me to help me have the strength to keep going (said emotionally)...to do it. And I felt I was really supported by a lot of Indigenous people to do that work...and you know...sometimes I would just....you know..do yoga or some kind of meditation and I’d just...think about the Indigenous people...who I knew...and their lives and what they told me...and that was...that...helped me to keep going...umm..I felt a real sense of responsibility...to them...so that’s also part of why I went public or why I was able to go public...”*

Victoria expressed the way she experiences the IRS legacy with regards to how she had to reconcile her view of her grandfather with many of the traumatic stories she was hearing from the many Survivors that were bravely coming forward.

*“...my grandfather was highly, highly respected in Manitoba and elsewhere. He was [in leadership positions in religious departments at a university]...he, like there had been articles written about him and his wife. With almost a kind of hero worship, you know like real just so much admiration for him as a person and that’s how I grew up thinking of him.... I thought of him as the epitome of goodness and that’s really true. So it was...very...difficult, particularly at the time because that’s when stuff about residential schools was really just coming out....”*

*“.I think, like I was doing this whole thing about ancestors right, in my book... And then I started to wonder about that side of the family because they’ve had a lot of contact with aboriginal people and I reread my grandfather’s memoirs and that’s when I realized ok he was involved with a residential school. And then I just really needed to know because there was just so much inflamed rhetoric going around in the papers. You know there was so much anger and hurt you know, on the part of survivors...I just needed to know what did my grandfather do, what because there was a number of counterarguments at the time who were saying ‘oh no it wasn’t that bad’ or good intentions...or....some schools were bad, some schools were better....and I had to try and*

*square this image I had of my grandfather as this very ethical person, with...his involvement in this system that ....sounded brutal. And I needed to do that because I guess I felt that if my grandfather could be so implicated in...these very destructive colonial patterns...so am I. And I was just feeling the need to understand...first of all for myself....I don't know if that answers why I did it publically. I guess because I'm a writer. (laughing) And also, I think because it was....I think because there was this public perspective that the racism and colonialism that affected Indigenous people was the actions of...a small minority of bigots and...I was...it just seemed really important to say...no it's not...you know...it's even you know...people who would otherwise seem exemplary were involved in this...this is a dynamic we have to look at...we're the...you know the socially progressives of a particular time...can do enormous harm... through their moral convictions. So...I think that's why I went public with it...because I felt that I could write about my grandfather as like a case study of how good people essentially...get...through their cultural assumptions, get enmeshed in colonial processes...so..you know...and what is a good person in that context is a good question.*

*Kim: Interestingly, although I am not a descendent of a former IRS staff, I have a recognition of feeling implicated in this history even though I was not the person physically working in the schools or even probably alive during this time. I have wrestled greatly around my involvement in a Christian mission organization. Many have said they see me as an exemplary person, for having volunteered my own time and efforts to 'better' the life of those 'less fortunate'. Although not a direct descendent of someone who worked in an IRS, doing this research highlighted for me how easy it could have been for me to be someone who might have worked in the school. I have come to wonder about the attitudes that brought me to work in a mission organization, and how perhaps they were not necessarily that different from someone who thought it was a good idea to work in an IRS. This is such a difficult thought for me, but speaks to me of the complexities around notions of guilt and responsibility and inheritance of attitudes specifically related to this IRS legacy.*

Victoria and Michael's words here seem to penetrate to the heart of the Settler identity in relation to the residential school history. As with the rest of this legacy, Michael's experiences and opinions highlight the complexity around looking at notions of guilt and responsibility. As a descendent, he does not resonate with feelings of shame as mentioned in Vice (2010) and Jenkins (2006) and this is an important point to acknowledge in highlighting the diversity of experience that needs to be acknowledged. Freeman highlights an important paradox conveying how one of the most violent policies in Canadian history was most likely carried out by some of the strongest social activists of that era:

...I mention these attributes not to sing the praises of my grandfather, though in many ways I cannot help admiring the man, but to counter the current stereotype that the missionaries and

others associated with the residential schools were cruel, insensitive, narrow-minded, and tyrannical. Nothing could have been further from the truth in my grandfather's case at least, and I do not believe he was an anomaly. In fact, as historian John Webster Grant remarked in Moon of Wintertime, his study of Canadian missionaries: "To an extent that is seldom recognized, the assault on Indian culture bemoaned by social activists today was led by social activists of an earlier era." That is a scary thought for me, I must admit, one that tempers any hubris I might have about my own social activism. (Freeman, 2000: 363)

#### **4.7: Exposing the IRS History: The Details**

A common theme in the stories of both participants' was around the importance they placed on creating a deeper understanding of the schools' histories. Michael was concerned with finding out a concrete record of who did what in the IRS system, while Victoria spoke more of finding out the variance of experiences, those both positive and negative.

Michael: "...And I...I think there's a million ways...there's so many ways in which a society...or multiple societies can try to tackle with and deal with those problems....but I think **one** way is to try to actually just really understand **what** went down...and what kind of decisions were made and what kind of conversations were had...what were the operational routines of the individuals who were involved with these schools, so we can **actually** have out there for public discussion and understanding, a really concrete record....I don't think it's good enough to say "Canada had a policy of assimilating Indian people... we made these horrible schools and yah kids had an awful time in them..."

Victoria: "...I guess I feel that...there are many many stories about residential schools...you know...there are the absolutely awful ones...and then there are other experiences too...and its important not to obliterate...the space for the other experiences....in order to have a really full picture of what happened there. I'm not saying that they counteract the negative but they are part of the story. Like I tend to think of it...that the big picture is the destruction of the cultures, and languages and families and communities...without question that's the overarching story of residential schools. But within that...there's all kinds of smaller pictures of...or smaller stories of...you know...resistance or...kindness or...you know all kinds of things...you know a very dear friend of mine named her daughter after one of the nuns...at the school where she was because that particular person treated her...was such an inspirational figure for her....and I think...some of the descendants of...or relatives of the staff members probably have some of those stories as well...that doesn't mean that they're probably not self-interested...of course...I just think that there's more nuance if we...if more people contribute to the...the telling of the history. "

Kim: *The main goal of this research process has been to attempt to further open the story and accounts of the IRS history in order to create a deeper understanding for joining with Indigenous peoples in moving forward. I see great importance in exposing such stories, in order to promote a more humanizing connection with this history that is ours as a country. Having listened to IRS*

*Survivor's and some family member's experiences, I think it is also very important for Settler's to 'bear witness' as conveyed by Regan (2010).*

The participants' sharing here can be easily linked to larger discourses surrounding the need to expose the history and legacy of the IRS system, including a look at Settler attitudes and actions (Regan, 2010; Milloy, 1999; Freeman, 2000). The TRC in Canada has attempted to create a space for such experiences to come forward; however, the participation, or lack of participation, on the part of Canadians in this process can and should be considered. The TRC had to recently take the Government back to court in an attempt to access all of the records of the schools. As mentioned previously, curiosity ensues to question the reasoning for the Government's and Canada's lack of cooperation in such TRC endeavours; is this hesitation for opening the records based on a desire to further the 'not knowing' as a nation? These are interesting questions to consider.

#### **4.8: Inheritance**

The theme of inheriting attitudes is interwoven into much of what both participants shared, especially with regards to views on native people, racism, colonialism etc. Both participants acknowledged the inheritance of attitudes in relation to the responsibility piece of the IRS history.

*Michael: "...I think, that the attitudes that made [my mom] think it would be good to work at an Indian Residential School are part of a certain kind of very mid-twentieth century, left liberal, paternalism, that has increasingly been revealed as in some way, misguided, as self serving, as certainly not an appropriate kind of... program...for a better society..."*

*"...you look back and you put it in the context of your biography and you can kind of realize that there's probably reasons...why I had opinions...why I was so outraged to kind of...encounter...the way certain people talked... the way the mainstream press talked [against looking into the IRS history]"*

*Victoria: "...I mean I still get tripped up by some of that stuff some of the time...but...I'd say there was...because I could acknowledge the history more fully...there's been much more trust in my*

*relationships with Indigenous people. They could trust me more...and because I could speak about it publicly they really valued that.*

*K: When you say you get tripped up...what do you mean by that?*

*Victoria: " well... I mean that....you know ... I was raised with certain attitudes...that I inherited...racist attitudes...colonial attitudes...attitudes of white superiority...attitudes of class...all kinds of things that I recognize are harmful and wrong and I certainly try to deconstruct them in myself and learn differently, but sometimes I'll still say something or do something that reflects either that kind of an attitude or just real insensitivity or...ignorance...and that's a lifelong process...it's never going to go away...you know...I...maybe do it less often than I once did...but it still happens....you just learn to be less scared of it. You know...in the sense that it's not the end of...my relationships if I do that, if I can work through it with the person..."*

*"...I am accountable for what I do with what I've inherited. I'm accountable for...the situation in the present. And the benefits and privilege that...I...inherited through this colonial process. ...I'm not responsible for what my ancestors actually did...because I wasn't there and I couldn't make those choices....but I still had a lot of feeling about that..."*

In her work Freeman discusses notions of memory:

*...In the case of the colonization of North America, two kinds of memory, or rather non-memory—that of family and that of the state-reinforce one other in suppressing our knowledge of our history with aboriginal people. But I believe that this history lives on in us, often unconsciously... (Freeman,2000: xvii)*

*Kim: I have come to see that I too have inherited various attitudes with respect to the IRS history. For instance, my past mentalities around my desire to be involved with a Christian group involved my need to confront attitudes of colonial superiority:*

Contemporary anti-racism research needs to test the extent to which such ideas are still deeply held among dominant group members of the church, and to what extent such ideas have given way to new understandings....For those in the church addressing racism, a precise and nuanced understanding of the history of the church's role in generating a white Anglo-Saxon normative identity for Canadian citizens is essential in order to know where the work of deconstructing white normativity needs to start... While there is a strong inclination in Canadian culture and Canadian churches to help the needy, this paternalistic helping (imperial saving) re-inscribes white racial privilege and dominance while directing the gaze away from structural and systemic causes of poverty and inequity. (Dei; Johal.(ED), 2005:139-140)

*The majority of the themes present in this section speak to notions of inheritance. I have inherited the 'silence' of previous generations surrounding the IRS history and I have carried forward a fear of confronting these issues based on this silence. I have inherited my 'privilege', and see I am accountable for how I move forward with it.*

Both participants and myself acknowledged, although to different degrees, the way in which the IRS legacy has influenced our inheritance of attitudes, beliefs and values.

Putting such perspectives within the context of some of the broader notions around inheritance (Barker, 2006; Regan, 2010), this understanding is important to capture in terms of attempting to address how this legacy is being felt and ultimately how to recover from it.

#### **4.9: The Personal Connection**

Both participants acknowledged the interest that others seem to find in their relation to an IRS staff member, and the importance of this connection. They both also expressed the importance of recognizing one's own personal connection to the legacy, not just as a descendent of a former IRS staff, but also as a Canadian. Connected to this theme is the theme of self-disclosure and the pressure that both participant's' expressed throughout their sharing.

*K: Is it something that you talk about very openly? That your mom worked at a school...*

*Michael: "Oh yah yah. you know...different conversations and different kinds of things but you know how when you're in a conversation you...always kind of thinking about what kind of self-disclosure is appropriate to this conversation, you know, and I think that my mom taught at a residential school, falls into, that kind of group where...group of facts where conversations of any length, or significance, it feels like a significant fact that shouldn't be kept out of the mix and so...and you know...people always want to know. You tell an Indigenous person that my mom taught at a residential school, they always want to hear more. It's...you know...it's a form of sharing..right...that at least with many of the people with whom I spoke...it's a form of sharing in which they're interested. It's kind of like "oh wow this white person has a history with residential schools. And it's not like I have anything terribly significant to tell them, it's just a kind of package that's... interesting..."*

*Victoria: "...Well it's still very...usually when I talk about that connection, people are quite interested because so few of the relatives of the staff members come forward publically. And I feel it's very important for that, you know, for that perspective to be heard...and...I certainly went through...when my work... I went through intense fear about my relatives reactions so...it was really hard for the first year or so until I got used to it. It was very scary, but what I would notice was that...when I did readings and things...other people would come forward and started talking to me...and I could just see in them how conflicted they were...you know...how painful it was. And I felt like I did create some space for those conversations to happen....and I think you know...there have been times where it has been scary to identify myself in this way...with*

*indigenous people because...they could get very triggered. But...usually...the response has been very positive to me doing so. I mean...they're glad that somebody at least is owning up to it..."*

*"...And I guess I feel fortunate in a way that having a direct connection to it...made it especially clear to me that...in terms of responsibility and accountability it's a much broader public..."*

*"...Well...what I really noticed as I went through this process of understanding my family's involvement in colonialism...just how enmeshed in that history I was. It helped me not deny the history...and I found that working through all those various feelings about it made it **much** easier for me to actually form positive relationships with native people...because I was a lot less conflicted....I mean I still get tripped up by some of that stuff some of the time..."*

*"...I definitely think...it would be useful for people to...reflect on their...on their relatives' involvement...and what that means and what they've inherited from that and what feelings they have about it. But...judging from my own experience it's quite a complicated legacy...but it can be a really...productive and useful legacy...it doesn't have to be only one of shame. It's a piece of the puzzle..."*

Again, although I am not a descendent of someone who worked in an IRS, doing this research here has deepened my sense of connection to this legacy. Although Michael and Victoria acknowledge the uniqueness of their connection, I believe that all Canadians need to see how they are linked to this history with regards to inheritance and perpetuating attitudes. I resonate with Victoria in the recognition that it is the ‘much broader public’ that held up the system, and continues to hold up colonial efforts today. Acknowledging these connections becomes imperative in our recovery from this abusive system. As a country, we all have recovery to do, as resonated with various others who have looked at this history (Regan, 2010; Chrisjohn and Young, 1997; Barker, 2006).

#### **4.10: Coming to the Table**

Both participants’ expressed their support for being a part of a meaningful dialogue with Indigenous peoples about this history. Michael mentioned his hesitation in ‘group dialogues’, but said that if an Indigenous person felt it would be meaningful for him to participate he would

consider it. Victoria was extremely supportive of this type of conversation and discussed it as one of the aspects of her work that she currently facilitates and participates in.

*Victoria: ...I think...I think it would be useful...I personally have never been part of a group discussion [with other descendants of former IRS staff]. I think it would be really interesting to be part of a group discussion...I definitely think...it would be useful for people to...reflect on their...on their relatives' involvement...and what that means and what they've inherited from that and what feelings they have about it...*

*K: ...so would you be interested in talking with other...because you've mentioned that maybe other family members have come forward and talked to you...is that something that you're interested in..or...*

*Victoria: Yah! That'd be really interesting....yah and I'd be curious to see more writing. Like even if people didn't want to talk face to face...I'd be curious and love to hear stories of people who...you know...maybe their parents were involved...or whatever you know...what their perceptions were and...how they grew up and...what they think of it now...and...what process they've gone through...I think that'd be really good to share....I just think that there's more nuance if we...if more people contribute to the...the telling of the history.*

*Victoria: I DO think it's important [to be willing to be involved in dialogue with IRS Survivors as descendants of former IRS staff]. And I've led a workshop [with Indigenous colleague]...that both the participants...you know there were 50 or 60 participants...from...some were Aboriginal...some were non-Aboriginal..some had connections...some were Survivors...others were church people, others had no direct connection...I don't know if there were people in the audience who were relatives of staff members, but I wouldn't be surprised given that there were a number of church people there. And...everybody there said 'oh it was so great to actually have dialogue together. To sit in a respectful place and listen to each other...and hear each other'...I think there's a real need for it and I think when we do that...I think the storytelling and the working in circle...is SO important to reconciliation...because...we're all part of the story...and we're all part of the healing...well can be...um...and the...you know..everybody has something to offer...and that's something that [indigenous friend/colleague] and I see over and over in our class...that people learn so much from each other's stories...and it breaks down stereotypes on all sides...and that's...really really important because...you know native people also have stereotypes...and...and fears...about who we are...that help make it difficult for them to listen to us sometimes...and you know...it's...it's really...useful and productive...for...to work in circle together...and I think...that's something that...[colleague] and I do fairly well together because that's...we can speak from our different perspectives, but also...promote respect for each other's perspectives..."*

*Kim: My work in this thesis was out of a desire to open the Settler dialogue that has been largely closed to date. Although not a descendent, I have personally seen the meaningful process that*

*can happen in opening such a space. My experience with the Indigenous community in Alaska was a deeply powerful example of this for me, as well as various interfaith dialogue groups I have sat in on. This being said, I wrestle with some of the harms that can also come from such spaces. Does it promote health for Indigenous Survivors and their families to have to listen to a Settler who uses racist language, or who justifies their colonial mentalities and actions? This is deeply important question to consider.*

Victoria's words penetrate to the heart of Lederach's (2005) call for the need to reconnect narratives that have been broken, or truncated. This being said, I believe it is extremely important to consider how and with whom such narratives are 'aired' so as not to further the violence for Indigenous Survivors and their families who have already suffered so much (Qwul'sih'yah'maht (Robina Thomas), n.d.). The notion of promoting dialogue is important to consider in recovery after such violence (Jenkins, 2006); however, how this dialogue looks in terms of creating a "respectful space", as mentioned by Victoria (Transcript, 2012), is a crucial consideration that needs to be made.

#### **4.11: Returning IRS Items: Rightful Ownership**

In their sharing, both participants talked about how they or their relative(s) turned over various materials they had of the IRS school for either historic purposes, such as the TRC or to Survivors.

*Victoria: "...when I asked to speak a couple of years ago [at the location of the school]...and [I was] asked if I had any pictures of the school, because nobody else has any photographs of it and...I did...I had one that my grandfather took....and it felt really great to give it to them...it has my father's family standing out in front of the school in the 1930's after the school was closed...(k-wow)...but they're standing there and this was used in the exhibit and then...I gave a talk...at the school...well not at the school, but about the school...a lot of people came and it was really great...people...really...were very nice to me...and you know...there was a recognition of connection..*

This theme to me was about ownership of our colonial history, especially the IRS legacy. Currently there is debate around who 'owns' the documents and photos of the IRS history; the Government appears to see themselves as the 'owner', while the TRC is abdicating that they

ultimately belong to the Survivors, their families and the broader IRS historical record. I see a paradox with the desire for us Settlers to ‘own’ material aspects of this history (which could ultimately expose our connection to this history), while through our continued silence, other aspects, such as the IRS legacy and its impacts are placed solely on Indigenous peoples shoulders. Again, this could speak to notions of colonial ignorance, and our desire to support our legacy of ‘silence’ outside the discomforts of guilt and responsibility (Regan, 2010; Barker, 2006, 2010; Chrisjohn and Young, 1997).

#### **4.12: Honouring both sides**

Victoria spoke openly about the struggle and challenge of speaking to the IRS legacy as in her work in light of a desire to honour Indigenous peoples, as well as her family. Michael, did not express this challenge out-right; however, in his sharing the theme of maintaining respectful relations did come up.

*Victoria: “...To stand in front of both residential school survivors and my family...at a time when there was no settlement yet. Things were still very contested and difficult and I had to try and find something to say that honoured both those groups. It was the hardest thing I’ve had to do and certainly the scariest. But you know, sort of afterwards my relatives relaxed a bit when they heard me speak. Because I think they had fears about what I was going to say. And they said...I remember a relative coming up to me and saying ‘you done good kid.’ And so I knew that somehow I’d managed to speak to both communities and I knew that cause some of the native people that were there talked to me as well. But it was really hard...”*

*“... I did circulate copies of the chapters [of her book *Distant Relations*] about my grandfather [to relatives] and...they certainly challenged me about a lot I had written. And I had to change some of it because they were right about some of it. You know...I didn’t know him and I sometimes jumped to conclusions and they would say ‘well how do you know that?’ and ‘he was at that meeting but you don’t know what HE said.’ And it was true and you know I think it taught me a lot about that...dead people can’t defend themselves. And that you do have to be really careful...in what you deduce from very incomplete historical records...”*

*Kim: This entire work, for me, has been about walking the ‘fine line’ of how to honour all involved in light of the years of oppression and horrible abuse for Indigenous Survivors of the IRS system. Some days I have deep pain and anger surrounding this history, questioning why as Settlers we should deserve to be ‘honoured’ in light of our continued lack of accountability for*

*the wrongs we have done to Indigenous people. However, during those days, the voices of people like Michael and Victoria, as well as children like my young nieces and nephews, keep me on a path striving for balance. I have questioned what such ‘honouring’ might look like, while still prompting the need for an honest, open and critical look at our history and connectedness. In many ways, I have not necessarily come to a concrete conclusion of this practice. I have had to continually remind myself that while I see it as important for us as Settlers to accept responsibility, I also believe that sitting in judgement, of self and other, without promoting change or movement, does nothing in terms of ‘journeying together’. I have found this a very challenging and harrowing balance to walk during this process.*

This theme very much relates to what the TRC has been attempting to do with its work documenting the IRS history and hosting national events across the country. Time will tell as to the successfulness in its endeavour. Barker (2010), Regan (2010) and Freeman (2000) also convey the great need for Settlers to confront our voice in order to truly be an ally with Indigenous peoples of this land. The next theme, then, very much relates to this one in terms of ‘finding the middle path’ towards humanization; calling back the ‘ghosts from a distant world’.

#### **4.13: Moving forward: ‘Finding the Middle Path’**

A question posed to both participants was what moving forward as a country in light of the IRS legacy looked like to them. Both responded that a deeper understanding of the colonial history and taking responsibility for injustices, like the IRS policy, needs to happen. Both discussed notions of decolonization, as well as the conflict between Indigenous peoples and the State. Michael expressed that for him, moving forward needed to include more energy put towards looking at issues of responsibility and allocating of resources. He strongly spoke about the issues that he sees with regards to the work that has an inward, self focus of individuals and confessing racism:

*Michael: “...I sometimes think in...certain segments...spend way too much time on how individuals feel...and emotion...and kind of psychological components of well being...and I think we’d be a lot better off talking about questions of responsibility and distribution of resources...and sometimes I think the..the intensive focus on the self... is a little bit of a flight away... I know that’s simplistic! And...because there’s huge relationships...between those kinds*

*of things, but a lot of the work...that is of that highly personal nature...I just don't tend to agree with where it's coming from...it doesn't resonate with me personally....yah.*

*K: Anything else you'd like to...*

*Michael: And, just a minute...and I think that kind of work also...is too heroic and demanding.*

*K: In what way?*

*Michael: That...the kind of work that is all about confessional, unpacking the kind of true deep unconscious depths of your own racism...and repenting...I think is...is highly personal, it's highly demanding, and because it's so personal and so demanding it requires a relationship to self that is kind of heroic...or eager for martyrdom...and..I think that it's not very helpful...for exactly those reasons...that it asks way too much and ordinary folks kind of see the people who are into that and who are doing it and say " pffft.... " (pause) yah...it's a dead end....and especially around Settler and Indigenous stuff...( said seriously and strongly)*

*"...But...I...I do think...(pause) the...real kind of focus inward... associated with particular versions... I don't think make those big leaps, big connections back, and I think they ask too much. We've gotta begin...we need to find some middle path. Like..something you don't need to be a hero...to kind of sign on for. Hero's probably the wrong word to use (laughing) but..."*

Victoria spoke about the work that she does as an attempt of moving forward and seeing the focus on local communities as important:

*Victoria:... it's difficult because... I mean even the construct of Canada is problematic for a lot of Indigenous people. They don't feel part of it...they might not want to be part of it...their ancestors never agreed to it...So....I guess what I look for are ways that we can support decolonization...and reconciliation. ..that don't end up...reaffirming the power of the Nation-State which is a colonial...definitely a colonial construct. How do we...is there a way to decolonize the country?..I'm just into working regionally. Ah...you know trying to build relations between Indigenous/non-indigenous people in a land based way. In different areas...because different areas have different histories and...different cultures of people there. I don't think there's a...I mean there might be some things you can do at a national level and some things you have to do at a national level...like repeal the Indian Act...you know stuff like that...but...a lot of the ground work I think has to be done in a more local way....so that's what I work at. Is building relationships locally. And...I work at public education... but...now what I do is I work with [name omitted]...and we teach together...so those are...you know...efforts to try and build relations where I am...they may have larger effects or they may not...it's hard to tell... but...that's where I've tried to put a lot of my effort...you know the work I've done...in helping to raise the issue of Indigenous governance and sovereignty and all that kind of stuff...just...like to me... Indigenous self-determination...and...governance...are the other side of the coin of reconciliation. You can't have one without the other. So....I guess I just try to work to make people aware of those issues and...but I don't think a top down approach is really going to work. And I think the federal government is the last...will be the last to support decolonization...they've got the most to lose.*

*Kim: Through work, studies, and experiences, I have learned the apprehension around apologizing for historic wrongs. On both Indigenous and Canadian sides I have heard that apologies do nothing, that action is needed. However, I have also heard the importance of apologies on both sides. In some ways, I cringe when I think of my story from Alaska, because I was so naive: was I doing it for the right reasons, was I just furthering my unconscious colonial attitudes? Similar to Victoria and her encounter with going to Africa, it was not until I found myself on an island in French Polynesia that the reality of colonialism hit me squarely in the chest. Somehow it took being in a place where English was not the dominant language for me to visibly see the implications of colonialism on that land and community.*

*Interestingly, although I am not a direct descendent of someone who worked in a residential school, my personal history has contributed to my feelings around my complicity and responsibility for the colonial violence here in Canada. Similar to Victoria, through my various experiences. I know that the colonial attitudes that I carry, and will recover from for the rest of my life are not simply inherent within all Christian faith communities. For it was in this Christian (Indigenous) community that I learned to challenge many of these colonial attitudes. The challenges deepened when I interned and then later worked in various Aboriginal non-profit organizations. A supervisor I worked with said to me years later that they took me on as a practicum student partly because they were curious how I would be being that I was coming from a Christian university. He laughed as he told me that he thought that I would attempt to convert the staff and youth, and that he was determined that they would try and convert me instead. He smiled and spoke of his surprise of when he found that I was not this way. By this point in my settler walk, I began to move through my feelings of guilt and shame, to a place of renewing acceptance.*

The theme of moving forward is a difficult one in light of the deep complexities of the IRS legacy. As illustrated by both participants, as well as my own experience, notions around what is important and useful in terms of how to move forward are varied. I put great thought into Michael's perspective in this, especially with regards to the work that I have done here and my attempts to open dialogue. I have questioned whether this work is in fact, too personal, calling people to be "heroes" in a way that is unhelpful or useful; however, I have to put these questions with the light of the decades of mistreatment and harms that have been done to Indigenous people. I think back to the question that an Indigenous person posed to me with regards to this thesis, asking me why it is courageous to confront our own violence given the years of hardship that IRS Survivors and their communities go through. Coming forward to testify or speak about the abuses that Survivors have endured is courageous. So the question should be asked as to

whether or not, as a Settler, confronting this personal legacy of violence is in fact heroic. This is an important consideration that should be made.

There has been an attempt to create a ‘middle ground’ by the TRC; however, time will tell as to its abilities in this. In light of the years of silence, I see that, as with Freeman (2000) and Regan (2010), ‘journeying together’ requires Settlers to embrace the discomfort and begin to talk more honestly about how we too have been imbued with the IRS legacy. Not because it is heroic, but because it is necessary. This being said, I was unsure how to respond to my questions based on Michael’s response, except to say that I see a great need to gain a concrete record of experiences, on both sides, in order to understand how to move forward. How can we as Settlers actually work towards recovery and bettered relations (if possible) if we do not even know our part in the journey, or why we are being called to join?<sup>22</sup>

In Freeman’s book, she elaborates the important point of how many of us in Canadian society do not know our colonizing history and yet despite this lack of knowledge, this history still pervades our senses (Freeman, 2000). Although I did not have a family member work in a residential school (that I know of), I resonate very much with Freeman’s words about feeling burdened by this history despite a lack of knowledge about it. I clearly see the privilege that I have been raised with at the cost of Indigenous livelihood.

<sup>22</sup> My original hope in opening this work was to somehow both capture the legacy, as well as to propose a way forward. Throughout this process, I have come to better understand the complexities of this legacy and to question my own motivations for desiring to propose a solution or transformation; is it based on a longing to move out of this discomfort, so that I can be ‘comfortable’ (Barker, 2006)? This is an important question to consider. More than this, in light of certain scholars such as Vice (2010), I have come to question the appropriateness, given my positioning as a Settler, with proposing how Indigenous and non-Indigenous in Canada should move forward .I have asked myself: Are such actions not somewhat like a perpetrator coming to a victim saying ‘this is how I will handle my wrongful actions, and how we should move forward with our relations; all the while still maintaining a sense of privilege? Although somewhat tongue and cheek, the horrible irony of this proposition struck me quite heavily during the process of this research. For reasons such as this, and time/length restrictions, I have not included a great deal in terms of *how* to move forward, like I had hoped, except to convey the importance of ending our ‘Settler’ silence with regards to our connection to this history.

## Chapter 5: Conclusion

During the work of this thesis, a campaign to capture one of Uganda's worst war criminals went viral. Kony 2012 came to the forefront of many conversations and movements to see Joseph Kony captured for the terrible abuses he is involved with in kidnapping children to work as child soldiers in Uganda. Although I of course resonate with the need for such people and acts to be stopped, I could not help but to situate this within the work that I was doing in this thesis. Many of my friends and other Canadians were so outraged at the horrible violence and acts of this man, calling him to be stopped. Yet they did not seem to feel a sense of responsibility to take action with regards to Canada's residential school legacy or the harms within colonialism. Instead, there is often a disconnection with confronting the ways in which many of the conflicts in those nations are fueled by the livelihood of our Canadian privileged lifestyles. Having this movement occur while immersed in this research process clearly conveyed to me how easy it can be for us as Settlers to confront acts done outside our yard, but to remain far more silent when it comes to confronting the horrible acts done on our ground.

I say this, putting myself within such situations as well; it has been incredibly difficult for me to even want to acknowledge my own faith-based history in this research for attempts to disconnect myself from the wrongs committed in colonial efforts like residential schools. Again, I want to be seen as 'okay' and not complicit in such acts of colonialism. More than this, as with Zizek (2008) and Churchill (2007), I too wrestle with the connection between how I choose to live my life, and seeing the ways this lifestyle contributes to the subjective violence elsewhere.

I have come to see that the politicization of the IRS policy and legacy has in many ways become the sacrificial lamb for confronting Canadians with both the subjective and objective violence of our colonial presence. As more and more stories come forward, the closet can no

longer be shut for our protection. That is to say, the Canadian benevolent caricature of colonization is now becoming more deeply called into question (Regan, 2010). It has been said that as Canadians, we often sit within what Wayne Warry (2007) calls ‘accidental racism’. Warry explains, “[the] use of this term is not meant to sugar-coat, but rather to signal that many, if not the majority of Canadians are not only ignorant of Aboriginal culture, they are also ignorant of their ignorance” (Warry, 2007: 16). Such ignorance can easily be an excuse for us as Settlers to avoid seeing our own implications in this history, especially within that of residential schools. Warry goes on to challenge our need for protection in Canada with regards to notions of guilt and responsibility:

The denial of the destructiveness of colonialism is essential if Aboriginal peoples are to be blamed for their current problems. If Aboriginal poverty is not the product of economic marginalization, then it must be the result of laziness or welfare dependence. If there is nothing in our history to feel guilty about, then we can ignore Aboriginal peoples’ claims for compensation or contemporary redress. If the intentions of our ancestors and forefathers were good, then any harm that was done can be rationalized, and we can start afresh. (Warry, 2007: 55)

In this case, the legacy of residential schools on both the Indigenous and Settler realms is blowing open the doors kept shut. In light of the thousands of stories of Survivors who have come forward, the Settler desire for disconnection could never be stronger. Fellows and Razack, in their work challenging the hierarchical relations of women-, specific to racial issues, offer some important perspectives with regards to what they call the “race to innocence”:

The race to innocence depends on the idea that the systems of domination are separate. This leads to women making a truth claim that they are subordinate in one system and failing to see their domination in another. Failing to see one’s domination in another system, however, and acting from that basis not only leaves the systems that privilege us intact, but it leaves the system that subordinates us intact as well. (Fellows & Razack. 1997-1998: 340)

As with many authors conveyed in this thesis, both participants were similar in their views that one of the most challenging things for us as Canadians is to confront our colonial presence. One of Michael’s strongest statements was that ‘we need to know who did what’ in the schools; for us as Canadians to be confronted very viscerally with the violence that occurred in

IRS system. To be sure, as Victoria points out, within the violent stories, there are also stories of attempted goodness and care; however, the overall policy of these schools we can no longer avoid. Attempting to capture the experiences of Victoria and Michael has highlighted that there is a Settler IRS legacy that can be seen being experienced by both participants'; however varied it may be: one grew up aware of its presence, while the other did not come to this realization until later in life.

More than ever, I have come to understand that in both the participants' experiences, as well as my own, the notion of 'silence' and disconnection was and still is a very present reality. I found this interesting being that as descendants, they are closely connected to this system. This heightens the question as to how strong the national attitude of silence has permeated Canadian society, both for those most closely connected to the legacy, as well as for those farther removed. In doing this research, I met another woman who shared that it wasn't until she learned about residential schools in higher education and went home and talked about it with her family that she was told she had had a family member who had worked in a school. I'm curious to know how common this reality might be for many relatives of former IRS staff, and how this silence relates to other authors who have spoken about historic amnesia (Regan, 2010); if this 'amnesia' existed for family members of staff, how much more could it exist for other Canadians? Again, I think back to the findings in the Report of the RCAP (1996) with how the mentality of silence was prevalent in the IRS schools. We can see now the legacy of such a mentality.

Michael also touched on a reality that could likely have existed for many who worked at the schools: Although his mom attempted to intervene in the abuse that she was witnessing on numerous occasions, he also states "but, you know, she worked there for two or three years..." (Michael, Transcript: 2012). This struck me quite heavily during the interview session, mostly

because it speaks to the complexities around responsibility, and accountability of a person facing the challenges of working within a social system where injustices occur. It also speaks to the complexities of complicity in the broader societal structural violence of colonialism. Although I desire to work in solidarity with Indigenous resistance, sovereignty and self-determination, I still live on this land and continue to benefit from the violence of systems. I think back to Samantha Vice's (2010) *How do I Live in This Strange Place?*, and see this as an important question for Canadians to ask ourselves. I was amazed that Michael was willing to acknowledge this difficult complexity.

In these two participants' cases, as well as for myself as a non-descendent, the IRS legacy experience asks us to wrestle with notions of guilt, responsibility, accountability, justice and the implications of our identity and connectedness to this history. Both participants expressed how their shifts in understanding with the IRS history in many ways came from education and their relations with Indigenous people. In Michael's case, there was a real sense of weariness for him growing up as a child listening to his mom's stories of the injustice of the IRS she worked in, although later as an adult he was able to more able to empathize with her experience.

To some degree of horror I have had the colonizer mirror held up to my face during this research process. Honestly, as much as I want to fight injustice, I have struggled to no end to find a way to run from this mirror and history; to excuse myself from the fact that it was not me who worked in the school, I can abdicate myself from this legacy because it is not my own, or this is what I had told myself. It is here that the conflict reaches its peak. If as a society, we want to put the guilt and responsibility on the government, the staff, and the churches that operated the IRS schools, how do I reconcile this with Victoria and Michael's relatives who were in all aspects of the word, genuinely good people trying to support the Indigenous students? One person who was

curious about my research topic said that they were very glad I was doing it because it is important for people to know that not all the staff and those implementing the policy were bad; that people need to understand that the IRS policy unfortunately just seemed to attract a few ‘bad apples’ whom have now painted a bad picture for all who worked there. I am not sure how to reconcile this. If the overarching policy of the schools was to ‘kill the Indian in the child’, and ultimately to assimilate Indigenous people into the Canadian mainstream society, where do the responsibilities and connections lie? This is a very difficult and complex, yet important question to ask as part of the legacy piece. I think of Michael’s story about his teacher in school who, when confronted by Michael’s father about the curriculum, responded that it wasn’t his fault but the Ministry of Education and to take it up with the Ministry. In essence, he was just doing his job, trying to make a living and to get along. I had to ask myself, would I have done anything different as this teacher? I wanted to believe yes, but honestly was not entirely sure. And again, when Michael’s mom attempted to talk with those around her about what was going on in the schools, no one wanted to hear it, or rather, confront it. For this reason, more than ever this research illustrates the complexity around attempting to locate blame or fault for those personally responsible in the IRS system. I see notions of collective responsibility become more useful, albeit complex, to discuss here.

On this note, Michael’s narrative around moving forward as a collective society from the IRS legacy challenged me with regards to the usefulness of this research:

*“...But...I...I do think...(pause) the...real kind of focus inward... associated with particular versions... I don’t think make those big leaps, big connections back, and I think they ask too much. We’ve gotta begin...we need to find some middle path. Like..something you don’t need to be a hero...to kind of sign on for. Hero’s probably the wrong word to use (laughing) but...”*

Michael's words caused me, of course, to stop and question the purpose of this thesis and where it might fit within what he was saying here. Victoria, on the other hand, very much seems to embrace much of the inward focus, speaking to the importance she has seen in promoting such inward awareness and dialogue in moving forward. In my analysis, one particular aspect she shared, which continues to reverberate in me since our interview session, is something I titled in my initial analysis as 'The Hardest Thing':

*"I think the hardest thing is when you confront the way colonialism has affected us personally...in our families....you know, the attitudes that we grow up taking for granted and it's really hard to deconstruct those without hurting the people you love..."*

As I write this, I continually have to turn away, work on something else, avoid and procrastinate. I assume this is a typical reaction to writing a thesis; however, I also know that this is because I continually do not want to face this reality of violence. What keeps bringing me back is that I know to do anything different than confront is to continue with my IRS legacy of denial, avoidance and ultimately perpetuating the objective violence that continues from this legacy, which does nothing for actually creating change. My initial desire in this work was to attempt to open dialogue in order to offer a way forward towards bettered relations. I have come to realize, that as with Regan (2010) and others, I see the great need for redefining violence within the IRS Settler legacy. As someone who is doing an MA degree in Dispute Resolution, I think, despite all of my previous experiences with decolonizing awareness, there was a large part of me that saw myself as a proponent of non-violence. Through this decolonizing research process and the use of auto-ethnography, I have come to see that although I am not a direct descendent of someone who worked in an IRS, I more deeply see how my own violence has contributed to the current relations of today in a deeper way than ever before; my image of being a 'non-violent' person has been shattered. This is not something that I necessarily expected to find in doing this

research. I now see a greater importance for us, especially those desiring to work in areas of conflict transformation/resolution, to confront the way such notions of violence might be living within oneself prior to attempting to step into such arenas.

In many ways, the participants themselves offered their own views of recovery and how to move forward. What I came to realize in desiring to include the conflict theory of Lederach (2005), is that there appeared to be a gap in addressing the admission or recognition of the theorist's own personal legacy of violence, despite his own work on conflict. Lederach (2005) offers brilliant insights into dealing with conflict in a way that can transform communities in relation to cultural and ethnic conflict; however, I was dismayed that as an American, he did not connect himself to the violence that had occurred as a result of him living on Indigenous land or the residential schools that took place there; there was no recognition of the traditional land that he might have been living on while writing his book. I was curious about how it seemed that even within the conflict resolution/transformation field this lack of recognition or silence surrounding one's own connection to violence and conflict seemed present.

Even as Survivors and family members have had the courage to come forward, I have experienced, and the two participants in this study also resonate, that in some ways we as Canadians desire to see the iconic IRS image as something that happened to Indigenous people, while severing our connection to it. We can feel extreme grief for Indigenous communities, and offer to provide assistance in helping such communities to heal; however, when it comes to looking at ourselves in the mirror with regards to our place in the violence, there can be a disconnection to recognize our face in it. I want to believe that I am 'okay'; that it wasn't actually me involved in the IRS system, leaving the school to be administered and operated by ghosts of another world. Unfortunately the legacy of these 'ghosts' seem to continue to haunt our

present Canadian state of being, whether I want to admit it or not. In his study of violence, Zizek conveys this phenomenon perfectly:

The experience that we have of our lives from within, the story we tell ourselves about ourselves in order to account for what we are doing, is fundamentally a lie - truth lies outside, in what we do.(Zizek,2008: 40)

Throughout this process, it has continually been my deep desire to respect the participants. I have had many sleepless nights since doing this work in attempting to gauge how to walk this extremely sensitive line between honouring Indigenous Survivors and calling for justice, as well respecting the descendants and their families represented here. As mentioned previously, I am somewhat less sure what this line looks like and whether or not it is actually as respectful as when I began this work.

For both Victoria and Michael there is a strong recognition and desire for Canadians to be faced very viscerally with the subjective and systemic acts of violence of the IRS system. Victoria acknowledged and publically came forward admitting ‘how [her] ancestors colonized North America’ and for her there seems to be great meaning in confronting the historic and present legacies of the past in order to be a true ‘ally’ of an Indigenous person (Freeman, 2000).

As mentioned, I came to this work, within my conflict studies, with a desire to better understand the conflict embedded in the IRS policy and to hopefully offer a way to transform the conflict. In many ways, I have wondered if this work is not actually just going to potentially fuel conflict, rather than transform it. What I am leaving with is a deepened revelation that potentially it is not my place to offer a way to transform this legacy, except to say that as Settler’s, we need to confront the way we experience the legacy for ourselves. There exists within conflict theories, notions of positive and negative peace (Galtung, 1964; Anderson, 2004), and what I have come to see with relation to the legacy of the IRS policy is that in many ways Canada is currently living in with a shallow semblance of peace. As long as the legacy of this violence, specific to

the Settler legacy of attitudes and actions, has not necessarily been addressed, such peace lives on shaky and unstable ground, as can be seen within the recent ‘Idle No More’ movement.

In light of my heightened awareness of our permeating silence surrounding the IRS legacy, I feel as though I am simply adding to a continuing list of calls for Canada to move forward in the difficult process of acknowledging our connection to this history through the great need to include IRS education, of both Indigenous and Settler legacies, in schools and society. In order to journey together, there needs to be a better understanding by Canadians about our connection to this legacy. In fact, the schools were not run by ghosts of a distant land, but rather they were run by people, often white Settlers in support of assimilative policy and practice. Our Settler inheritance of this legacy calls to us that we need our own recovery from such a history and colonial presence. I have come to see that it is the voices of descendants of former IRS staff that can help to further open this dialogue, calling into question notions of guilt and responsibility.

As allies, we learn to listen with humility and vulnerability to the history of dispossession, racism, and oppression that is still alive. We critically reflect upon these stories as a catalyst for action.  
We take full responsibility for the IRS system (Regan, 2010:230)

## **5.1: Future Research**

As this research only presents an introduction to the experiences of two Settler descendants of former IRS staff, I believe great understanding can be given through gaining the experiences of other descendants within Canada. It could be useful to do a study to see the variance of experiences of descendants whose family members worked at different IRS schools, regions and provinces. Further from this, differentiating between direct descendants of daughters/sons and extended descendants of grandchildren, nieces, nephews etc could provide a more concrete understanding of how the IRS legacy is being experienced. I predict that there

would also be a difference in experience and attitude from a family member versus a descendent; for instance the experiences of a sister to a staff member versus a daughter.

This work inherently touched on aspects of complexity within the relation of faith-based traditions in the residential school legacy. As mentioned, I see great importance in further research seeking to better understand the way in which the IRS legacy may be infusing itself within various church communities in Canada.

In attempts to create the most comprehensive understanding of the IRS legacy possible, another area I think important to include is looking at Indigenous descendants of Indigenous IRS staff. Although this was not an aspect that I spoke to in this work, I recognize the great need for a deepened understanding of the complexities of the overarching legacy that these voices would likely include.

The work here has attempted to focus on capturing the IRS legacy within present generations. This being said, I see that it could be important to address the legacy of those involved in the 60's scoop and the great numbers of Indigenous children now living in foster care.

## **5.2: Final Thoughts**

In the end, looking back at this process, there are some overarching elements that came to light in terms of the IRS legacy. The first element is a deepened call for Settlers to come to the table, to be willing to honestly examine ourselves both personally and as a society; to acknowledge that we too have not come out unscathed from colonial policies such as the IRS system; in many ways we have been actors in it. However unsettling, challenging, and painful it is to confront our colonial 'myths' (Regan, 2010), to continue to live in denial only continues to perpetuate the dehumanization of ourselves; ultimately furthering the oppressive relationship we

have with Indigenous peoples. We must be willing to look, however difficult it is, at the violence that has permeated, not just Indigenous peoples lives, but our own as well, and the way in which we may have been and continue to be perpetrators of this violence.

This move out of the cloud of colonial ignorance towards that of a renewing awareness highlights another important element that continually arose in this research process; the role of education and the need for implementing a national curriculum of this history and legacy. In the call for the need for IRS education across the nation, the TRC speaks to the implications in the face of continuing our colonial silence:

Perhaps most tragic of all, students crossing the threshold of their schools today (with the exception of the NWT and Nunavut, who just adopted curriculum) may never learn about this history. They won't learn it because it won't be taught. Such is the reality and the continuing legacy of the Residential School System. The students in Canada will not learn about the 150,000 children who were taken from their communities over the course of 150 years so their respective languages and cultures could be erased. They will not read about the villages and camps left empty of children, or powerless parents left on the tarmac or the lake shore as their little ones flew away. Students will not discuss the indoctrination, the abuse, the brutality visited upon the children and the disregard with which their deaths were often treated and the unmarked graves where they were buried, lost forever to their unknowing parents. The current generation of Canadian students, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous, is destined to repeat the patterns of generations past. Given the knowledge that has been kept from them, snap judgments will be made and negative stereotypes invoked. This will happen, rightly or wrongly, because nobody ever felt that it was important enough to teach them the difference. (TRC Blog, Oct 2, 2012)

We can see that to continue down this road of colonial amnesia is to continue to pass on this legacy to the generations to come. In the end, I sit here unable to, and unwanting to, offer some way through this horrible reality that is ours as a country. I sit here now only knowing that the way forward to a healthier path for all cannot come unless and until we as a country begin to acknowledge our legacy and its burden. As with both participants,' what I do know is that the focus forward must incorporate a variety of elements including individuals and collective society taking responsibility for historic and perpetuated violence, and acknowledging one's connection in the critical hope of bettered relations.

In this, I more deeply understand the crucial need to acknowledge and consider the diversity of perspectives and experiences around these topics. For instance, Elizabeth Povinelli highlights that often reconciliation discourses that support the importance of addressing shame as a country, specific to colonial violence, can in many ways further entrench the exclusionary mentalities of ‘us’ and ‘them’; reinforcing the notion that the nation itself is made solely of white citizens, dealing with their ‘white’ experiences, ultimately furthering such focus and privilege (Povinelli, 1998:588-589). These perspectives are extremely important with regards to the work that I have attempted to highlight in this thesis and I have had to ask myself whether this work does in fact further promote such exclusionary mentalities.

Another concluding thought was that I originally approached this work believing that it was important to capture the narratives of Settlers, regardless of their perspectives or experiences. However, one of my deepest struggles throughout this process has been the need and importance of working from a ‘do no harm’ principle. Such a principle has been extremely difficult to navigate in the face of continued injustices towards Indigenous people in Canada. I believe it is extremely important to consider that some Settler truths, while potentially important for Settlers to contemplate, may be extremely hurtful and damaging for an Indigenous individual to hear. For this reason, I have come to question the health in promoting dialogue and airing such experiences publically. This is an important consideration that should be made in any future work within this arena.

At the end of the day, the most difficult aspect of this work was around my wrestling with many of my own values. The most important value was balancing notions of justice, with that of respect for others, and my own great desire to be seen as ‘okay’ by all. I have had to juxtapose the importance of being ethically responsible, and likeable, in the face of the horrible

harms that Indigenous people have had to endure. I ask myself, why we as Settlers should be given this respect and space in the face of such harms, especially in light of our continued silence and perpetuation of many of these issues. In many ways I have wondered if this process would not have been better to confront had I opted not to use participant interviews. In this way, I would have been less constrained within the confines of the University requirements, and my own fears. While somewhat true, I also have come to see that that the great need for accountability, which I wrestled with in this work, has been really important in displaying the deeper complexities of this topic and my own Settler legacy. It is this accountability that is still largely missing from our dominant discourse being that as Settlers we still live largely in our usual privileged position. In many ways I can see that such accountability, while extremely uncomfortable and complex, calls me back to my humanness through highlighting the importance of relations, of both Indigenous and non-Indigenous people. I have been humbled and found a reconnection within myself in a way that I did not necessarily expect; that is, to acknowledge and confront my passivity towards action of working to confront the colonial violence and legacy that still permeates our society; however, while this is all well and good, I am still left with the question of how to reconcile this growth for myself, and other Settlers, with the continued harms that still continue to happen to Indigenous people.

In the face of all of these complexities, Adam Barker points out that unfortunately there is no plan or ‘procedure’ for recovering from our colonial legacy, except to say that to do nothing is to live in failure (Barker, 2010). Barker outlines what he sees as a true Indigenous ally:

“...Settler people who hope to become effective allies must move past the desire to re-establish comfort and ask the question, ‘What do we do?’ from a profoundly uncomfortable place. This place of profound discomfort, generated by an honest inquiry into the causes and effects of colonialism, and our individual responsibility for colonization, is what Regan (2006) has referred to as ‘unsettling the Settler within.’ (Barker, 2010:323 as seen in Davis,(ED) 2010)

Honestly, I do not want to finish here. I want to have answers that will somehow create a change, specifically to better relations and bring health. As ridiculous as it sounds, I feel deep grief over the fact that there is no one really to hold myself and other Settler's truly accountable for these historic and present harms left by this legacy. In many ways, the accountability is on us as Settlers, and this is a frightening prospect. Honestly my desire for accountability is not based on a longing to be relieved of the discomfort that I feel, but rather, on the faces of my young and innocent nieces and nephews, and the Indigenous people around me, to actually live a different legacy.

This work, then, has ultimately shown me that, while deeply complex, there is great importance in calling back the ghosts of the distant worlds; to realize that such distant lands were an illusion set up for our own comfort, all the while furthering to feed our own dehumanizing disconnection needed for perpetuating harm. I want to end this work on a note that calls us forward, and challenges us to be better, to a brighter future and bring those warm, comfortable feelings; however, maybe what is actually needed is to sit in this discomfort of complexity, to allow what has happened on this land and our connection to it to actually enter our consciousness; to be reconnected with our sense of humanity outside the guise of our incessant need to just 'fix it'. I leave this work with a quote from Victoria's work, conveying her own struggle, as well as her sense of necessity surrounding the need for such work:

Writing this book [Distant Relations] has been such a journey of joy and pain, knowledge and self-knowledge, such a huge, huge learning, and massive undertaking. Writing my own history has been invigorating and empowering: I've made my own judgements of my ancestors. I know how I got here. Sometimes I feel I can't hold it all in my heart. I believe it is possible to move beyond this ugly and often violent history, to be a society that is founded not on mere "tolerance," but on respect a society that lives up to its word. But I know we can't move forward until we look the past in the eye, until we understand ourselves more deeply, acknowledging and exploring even the darker aspects of our history- not to damn our forebears, but with hope for a more humane world. (Freeman, 2000:467)

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## Appendices

### **Appendix A:**

#### **Interview Introduction and Guidelines**

*Indian Residential School (IRS) Background information:*

#### Canadian Indian Residential School Legacy

“Residential schools for Aboriginal people in Canada date back to the 1870s. Over 130 residential schools were located across the country, and the last school closed in 1996. These government-funded, church-run schools were set up to eliminate parental involvement in the intellectual, cultural, and spiritual development of Aboriginal children. During this era, more than 150,000 First Nations, Métis, and Inuit children were placed in these schools often against their parents' wishes. Many were forbidden to speak their language and practice their own culture.” (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada Website. 2012)

“... the residential school system was an attempt by successive governments to determine the fate of Aboriginal people in Canada by appropriating and reshaping their future in the form of thousands of children who were removed from their homes and communities and placed in the care of strangers. Those strangers, the teachers and staff, were, according to Hayter Reed, a senior member of the department in the 1890s, to employ "every effort...against anything calculated to keep fresh in the memories of the children habits and associations which it is one of the main objects of industrial education to obliterate."<sup>16</sup> Marching out from the schools, the children, effectively re-socialized, imbued with the values of European culture, would be the vanguard of a magnificent metamorphosis: the 'savage' was to be made 'civilized', made fit to take up the privileges and responsibilities of citizenship.

Tragically, the future that was created is now a lamentable heritage for those children and the generations that came after, for Aboriginal communities and, indeed, for all Canadians. The school system's concerted campaign "to obliterate" those "habits and associations", Aboriginal languages, traditions and beliefs, and its vision of radical re-socialization, were compounded by mismanagement and underfunding, the provision of inferior educational services and the woeful mistreatment, neglect and abuse of many children — facts that were known to the department and the churches throughout the history of the school system.” (Royal Commission Report on Aboriginal Peoples, 1996: 312)

#### Prime Minister Harper's Apology, 2008

“The legacy of Indian Residential Schools has contributed to social problems that continue to exist in many communities today. It has taken extraordinary courage for the thousands of survivors that have come forward to speak publicly about the abuse they suffered...The burden of this experience has been on your shoulders for too long. The burden is properly ours as a Government and as a country. There is no place in Canada for the attitudes that inspired the Indian Residential Schools system ever to prevail again. You have been working on recovering from this experience for a long time and in a very real sense, we are now joining you on this journey.” (Prime Minister Stephen Harper, 2008)

#### *Interview Introduction:*

Working from Prime Minister Harper's 2008 Apology to former Residential School Survivors, this research is seeking to look at the intergenerational experiences of the IRS policy on non-Indigenous Canadians – specifically, the experiences of the family members of former IRS staff in facing the processes underway under the IRS Settlement Agreement and the associated nation-wide publicizing of longstanding/historical conflict and trauma. My hope is to understand the burden that is indeed ‘ours’ as

non-Indigenous Canadians, specific to the Residential School legacy, as stated by Prime Minister Harper's Apology. This understanding is for the purposes of promoting individual awareness, as well as to help open the conversational space between Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities in Canada.

As this time is meant to provide an open, safe, comfortable space with which to engage in a process of reflecting and understanding your experiences as a relative of someone closely connected to the IRS legacy, a few guidelines for the truth-telling session are listed for your consent.

1. This space is a time for you to openly speak about your experiences, thoughts and feelings in relation to the Residential School Legacy.
2. You are not required to share any information that you do not desire.
3. The various interview questions/topics have been provided to you prior to the narrative process for your consideration. These questions are offered as guideposts for your sharing, and are flexible to shift, as seen fit, during the interview process.
4. My role during this interview is to be a facilitator of your sharing. I will aim to ask minimal questions in order to prompt your discussion.
5. The interview length is entirely dependent on you as a participant, but could last up to 1 to 2 hours.
6. If at any point you feel uncomfortable, emotional, fatigued or other, and would like a break from the process, please let me know and a break will be given. The interview will not resume until you consent that you are fit to continue.
7. If at any point you do not feel comfortable to go forward with the interview process, you are able to withdraw without any recompense. Any information shared will be destroyed and will not be used.
8. The interview session will be audio recorded for research purposes. Anonymity and confidentiality will be upheld, and the audio tape will be destroyed upon the completion of this study.

#### **Appendix B:** Sample Interview Questions:

The interview process will be conducted in a narrative, open-ended, in-depth method, allowing participants to share their experiences relating to the IRS legacy. As a result, it is anticipated that the researcher will not be asking many questions other than to facilitate the sharing of the participant. These are some potential questions that may be used to 'prompt' the participant's sharing.

#### Introductions:

- a. Name of Interviewee
- b. Name of Interviewer
- c. Name of all other witnesses/participants in the room
- d. Date of Interview (including year)
- e. Location of Interview

#### Biographical:

- a. Tell me about your relative that worked in a Residential School. Which school did they work at? What did they do at the school? What was their role?

#### Residential Schools:

- a. Tell me about your experiences of being related to someone who worked in a Residential School in light of current events such as Harper's Apology, the IRS Settlement Agreement, the TRC and various other media.
- b. Tell me about your connection to Indigenous people in Canada both past and present. Has this connection changed from when you were younger?
- c. Tell me about how your family related(s) to Indigenous people in Canada.
- d. Tell me what it was like for you in school and learning about Residential Schools. (assuming this was discussed)
- e. Are you aware of Prime Minister Harper's Apology to former students in 2008? Tell me how you relate to this.
- f. Studies have shown in other communities where similar historic abuses have occurred that descendants of those directly involved with implementing these systems feel a personal sense of burden/guilt/shame. Tell me how you relate to this.

Reconciliation:

- a. Tell me what moving forward personally and nationally from the IRS legacy looks like to you. How do you think we as a country can better our relations with Indigenous people in light of the IRS policy?

Closing Remarks:

- a. Do you have any last thoughts you would like to share?