Canadian Immigrant-Descendant and Immigrant Faculty Member Reflections as they Approach the Calls to Action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission

by

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B.A.Sc., University of Guelph, 1987
M.Sc., University of Guelph, 1991

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We acknowledge with respect the Lekwungen peoples on whose traditional territory the university stands and the Songhees, Esquimalt and W̲SÁNEĆ peoples whose historical relationships with the land continue to this day.

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Abstract

This research explored the experiences of immigrant-descendant and immigrant faculty members as they approach the work they are invited to contribute to reconciliation by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action (2015b) through their roles as post-secondary educators. The purpose of this research was to better understand the experiences of immigrant-descendant and immigrant faculty to inform how they can be supported in reconciliation work, particularly as they contemplate engagement in the consciousness-raising, ally work and institutional changes that are required as we walk in a new way with Indigenous Peoples.

On the journey towards reconciliation that Truth and Reconciliation Commission Chair Justice Murray Sinclair (Ojibway) envisions (Macleans, 2015), this research further considers why and how we might come together as Indigenous Peoples, immigrant-descendants and immigrants, stopping at fires of action along the way that collectively encompass the circle surrounding reconciliation (Newman, 2018). Two central concepts interweave throughout, the commitment to creating ethical spaces of engagement (Ermine, 2007) and the practice of research as ceremony (Wilson, 2008, S. Wilson, personal communication, February 2, 2020).

Given the dearth of literature available at the time of writing that directly related to this research, a range of philosophical and theoretical scholarship and works of practitioners provided the foundation. These sources shared a focus on social transformation and included formative works by Dewey (1939), Freire (1970/2000, 1973), Habermas (1994, 2002) and Bronfenbrenner (1979), highlighting Habermas' communicative action theory and Bronfenbrenner's ecosystem of human development. Additional works by practitioners such as Bishop (2015), DiAngelo (2011), Gehl (n.d), hooks (1990), Luft and Ingram (1955), Sennet (2015), Sensoy and DiAngelo (2017) Snowden and Boon

(2007), and Wheatley and Frieze (2011) provided further insight into creating ethical spaces for engagement.

Rooted in my emerging understanding of my ontological stance as a relativist and a tendency towards the epistemological perspective of constructivism, aligning with the interpretive paradigm, the research took an anti-oppressive research approach (Potts & Brown, 2015) informed by the Indigenist research paradigm (Wilson, 2007, 2008). Following exploration of narrative inquiry in the dominant culture and as practiced by Indigenous scholars, a narrative approach was undertaken to gathering data. Individual conversations were held with 15 participants, all faculty members at Royal Roads University, a small public post-secondary institution in what is now called Victoria, British Columbia, Canada. A group conversation with eight of the participants followed the individual conversations.

Nine themes emerged from the meaning making process that followed these conversations: *locating self*, *clarifying purpose*, *institutional challenges*, *relationships with Indigenous Peoples*, *relationships with Indigenous Knowledges, curriculum*, *teaching*, *self-reflections* and *what might help*. A framework based on the intersection of self-assessed competence and confidence in a given context was developed to provide an empirical heuristic (St. Clair, 2005) to provide insight into the experience of faculty members at Royal Roads, faculty members at other institutions and perhaps for ally work in different contexts.

Throughout the study, I recorded my autoethnographic observations. These observations revealed cultural epiphanies that provided insight into my "deeper level thoughts, interests and assumptions" (Ermine, 2007) and supported ongoing critical reflection of the work as it unfolded.

This dissertation concludes with reflections of the work overall, identifying some of the research limitations, suggesting recommendations for future action and research and reflecting on the tremendous impact that this has had, and will continue to have, on me personally and professionally.

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Introduction

I am a visitor to the ancestral lands of the Lekwungen and Xwesepsum families in what is now referred to as Victoria, British Columbia, Canada. I am grateful to elected Chief Ron Sam of the Songhees Nation, and elected Chief Robert Thomas and hereditary Chief Edward Thomas of the Esquimalt Nation, who represent those families for their graciousness in allowing my family to visit here.

My ancestry can be traced back to England and northwestern Europe, Scotland, Ireland, Norway and Germanic Europe. I was born in the lands of the Algonquin Nation and spent much of my formative years where the people of the Tyendinaga Mohawk Nation have lived since time immemorial. My mother and father have ancestors who immigrated in the 20th century to the lands of the Alderville Nation and lands of the Caldwell Nation, respectively, and each have ancestors who are understood to have first arrived in the lands of the Nauset Nation in the 17th century.

The Ball Cap

Several years ago, I was seated at an exhibitor's table at the *Gathering Our Voices Conference* for Indigenous youth hosted by the British Columbia Association of Aboriginal Friendship Centres when a young woman came around handing out ball caps embroidered on the front with the word "Decolonized". I laughed uncomfortably when I took mine, but those around me encouraged me to wear it. As soon as I put it on, I felt a mixture of uncomfortable emotions. I hastily gave it away to someone who asked about it. I knew I was not decolonized, yet here I was sitting at a table at this conference promoting to Indigenous Peoples enrolment in the post-secondary institution where I work. I noticed that I was not the only immigrant-descendant who felt this way. By the end of the day, none of the immigrant-descendants who were staffing exhibits in the hall were wearing the ball caps. Would I ever feel right wearing one? This research was born in part from a desire to find out.

Chapter One: Joining the Circle Surrounding Reconciliation

Why me? Why now?

I was motivated in large part to undertake doctoral work in Curriculum and Instruction in the Faculty of Education because I saw a problem for which I thought I had a solution. I came to this problem through my work life, though the boundaries in this case are blurred. I have been employed by four Canadian post-secondary institutions over more than three decades in a variety of administrative roles. For much of this time I had some measure of responsibility for Indigenous student success, and activities that might now be characterized as promoting reconciliation. For many years I had thought of enrolling in graduate work for the same reasons that motivate many graduate students. I wanted to push myself and my learning, earn a terminal degree and achieve a lifelong dream. The problem seemed to open a door to doing something that might make a positive difference while achieving these aims.

For the past 16 years I have worked at Royal Roads University, a small university in what we now call British Columbia, Canada, where I have held a wide range of responsibilities. Latterly I have had the privilege to serve in a senior leadership role, embracing a portfolio that includes a teaching and learning centre, the Library, a constellation of student support services, and Indigenous education and student service functions. These experiences have made me keenly aware of the challenges that post-secondary institutions face in understanding their own systemic colonization, and the complexities of serving the greater good of all peoples through contributing to apology, reparation, and restitution to Indigenous Peoples in the lands we now call Canada. I have engaged with the Indigenous education and student service functions and the teaching and learning centre and facilitated a cross-institutional group of faculty and academic leaders in what we have characterized as decolonizing our curriculum and walking forward in a new way with Indigenous Peoples. In these lands, and for the purposes of this dissertation, Indigenous Peoples include those whose are of the First Nations, Métis, or Inuit ancestry. This made me very curious about the ways in which faculty see themselves as contributors to this work. Even until the

time of writing this dissertation, there were no Indigenous regular full-time faculty members at Royal Roads University, and so I was particularly interested in the experiences of faculty who are immigrant-descendants and immigrants.

I use the phrase "immigrant-descendants and immigrants" as an alternative to the terms "settler" and "non-Indigenous" as a working concept to describe people who live in the lands we now call Canada and are not Indigenous to these lands. I do so in keeping with the teachings that have been shared with me by Burt and Lavina Charles (Scia'new), Clarence (Butch) Dick (Songhees), Mary Anne Thomas (Esquimalt), Jessica Sault (Tseshaht) and Asma-na-hi Antoine (Toquaht) that invite people to identify with the place that their ancestors come from and how they came to be in the lands where they are currently. Referring to those of us whose ancestors are not from these lands in this way describes how we came to be here, and not what we came to do here.

I have had many opportunities to consider, and in some small ways to act upon, what I could do to help make change to walk forward with Indigenous Peoples as well. My place in this work was crystalized by the release of the Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in 2015 (Truth & Reconciliation Commission, 2015a) and its associated Calls to Action (Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 2015b). In a speech he gave at the release of this Report, Truth and Reconciliation Commission Chair Justice Murray Sinclair challenged all people in the lands we now call Canada to join in the journey towards reconciliation, stating

> Achieving reconciliation is like climbing a mountain — we must proceed a step at a time. It will not always be easy. There will be storms, there will be obstacles, but we cannot allow ourselves to be daunted by the task because our goal is just and it also necessary. (Macleans, 2015)

The Report's Calls to Action provide many pathways that together will lead us to the top of the mountain, but understandably do not tell us how to move towards them or along them.

Initially it seemed to me that this should be straightforward. At that time, I was keenly aware that my formal roles had given me the privilege of some awakening insight into reconciliation. My colleagues, who would be the ones carrying this work forward with me at my home institution, the vast majority of whom are well-intentioned and motivated to make change, were increasingly expressing a desire for this learning. The Calls to Action identify academic disciplines that prepare post-secondary students for work in occupations that have been complicit in the oppression of Indigenous Peoples of Canada, including education, law, medicine and nursing, journalism and media studies, and social work (Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 2015b). The first in this series, Call to Action 24, models the format for these identified disciplines:

> We call upon medical and nursing schools in Canada to require all students to take a course dealing with Aboriginal health issues, including the history and legacy of residential schools, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Treaties and Aboriginal rights, and Indigenous teachings and practices. This will require skills-based training in intercultural competency, conflict resolution, human rights, and anti-racism. (Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 2015b, p. 3)

Additionally, Call to Action 57 proposes that public servants be provided similar education and Call to Action 65 promotes the advancement of research on reconciliation. As a public servant inspired to conduct research, these Calls called out to me.

In an early search of the literature I found an article that proposed the establishment of a school for public servants to focus on "how the topics of history and legacy of Indian residential schools and

related topics identified by the commission can be integrated into public servant school curricula" (Weiler, 2017, p. 17). Ah, I thought, all we had to do was to figure out how to present the facts and all would be resolved. Post-secondary institutions are populated with people who are experts in education and myriad disciplines who could shed light on the past and the present state of Indigenous Peoples in Canada. Surely it would be easy to create a course that the faculty and staff charged with enacting the work in response to the Calls to Action could take. For an assignment in my first doctoral course I continued on this path, framing my emerging research question as follows: "How can a Canadian post-secondary institution educate their employees about the history, cultures and contexts of Indigenous Canadians generally and the local Nations specifically so that they will be better equipped to engage in reconciliation?"

It is significant that the role of education in reconciliation work with Indigenous Peoples is second only to child welfare in the Calls to Action. Calls to Action 62 through 64 delve further into the Kindergarten to Grade 12 education system (Truth & Reconciliation Commission, 2015b). There is a growing body of scholarly and practical work to ground this training for Canadian Kindergarten to Grade 12 teachers (Aitken & Radford, 2018; Burridge et al., 2012; Kerr, 2014; Kerr & Parent, 2018; Lamaire, 2020; Madden, 2015; Martin et al., 2017; Poitras Pratt & Danyluk, 2017; Purton et al., 2020; Rodriguez de France, 2018; Steinhauer et al., 2020; Whitinui et al., 2018) and courses that address this Call to Action are now a core mandatory component of Bachelor of Education programs in Canadian post-secondary institutions (see for example Queen's University (n.d.), University of Saskatchewan (n.d.) and the University of Victoria (n.d.)). Thus, new teachers do not graduate without a foundation in teaching a range of topics that address Call to Action 62. In-service teachers are expected to complete training connected to mandated changes in curricula by school districts across the country as well, and teachers'

federations offer a range of professional development workshops (see for example the British Columbia Teachers' Federation (n.d.) or the Ontario Teachers' Federation (n.d.)).

There is no parallel for post-secondary faculty. Post-secondary faculty in the lands we now call Canada come to teaching from the strength of their expertise in their areas of study, and at public universities, are not required to complete training in curriculum development and teaching and learning facilitation. Post-secondary institutions offer their faculty optional training opportunities through teaching and learning centres, but because the same gaps in knowledge and expertise that the Calls to Action identify exist in many of these contexts as well, there is variability across institutions. No matter how robust or how readily available this support is, the onus remains on individual faculty members to choose to participate.

Discussing this with my colleague and friend Dr. Virginia Mckendry one day, she recommended that I read an article by Cree scholar Willie Ermine. Advocating for Indigenous legal rights in Canada, Ermine (2007) proposes that for true dialogue to occur between Indigenous Peoples, immigrant-descendants and immigrants, we must embrace "ethical spaces of engagement" (p.193).

Drawing from Poole (1972, as cited in Ermine, 2007) who witnessed a Polish citizen and a military officer facing one another and imagined the physical space between then as open to define, Ermine suggests that we conceive of a space between our respective positions that is available for us to step into to "detach from the cages of our mental worlds and assume a position where human-to-human dialogue can occur" (p. 202). As we enter this space, Ermine recognizes that shedding these mental cages is not easy, observing that "What remains hidden and enfolded are the deeper level thoughts, interests and assumptions that will inevitably influence and animate the kind of relationship the two can have" (p. 195). Reflecting on the space between me and my colleague and sister Asma-na-hi

Antoine (Toquaht) who led our Indigenous Education and Student Services unit single handedly for six years, I thought of several examples of where I had “aha moments” in our interactions that helped me to see aspects of the mental cage that I bring to our discourses. Ah, I thought, all we need to do is to tell people the facts and tell them that they must shed their mental cages too. I even had some ideas of what I could tell them about my experiences that they could take away to use.

Artist and activist Carey Newman (Kwakwak’awakw/Coast Salish) spoke at a local conference around the same time, sharing the teaching of his ancestors which suggested that a challenge is to be placed in the middle of a circle of people to work it out together (Newman, 2017). He went on to draw the metaphor of reconciliation as the challenge that all peoples who now call these lands home must encircle[1]. Harkening back to Ermine (2007), it occurred to me that in the context of reconciliation, there are not just two positions, as was the case in Poole’s original observation or as in the case of a traditional legal context where adversaries face one another as Ermine had examined. Instead, there might be many perspectives coming to a physical or figurative place where people could form a circle with reconciliation placed in the “ethical space” in the middle. Imagining the circle of Indigenous Peoples, immigrant-descendants and immigrants contemplating the question of reconciliation at a post-secondary institution, it seemed to me that it would be dominated by immigrant-descendants and immigrants, some of whom would be there with good intentions, some hesitantly, some grudgingly and some with trepidation. It started to become clearer to me that making sure that everyone shows up knowing the facts and that they have some work to do to shed their mental cages would not be enough.

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[1] I refer to the circle surrounding reconciliation throughout this dissertation, acknowledging that it is Newman’s conceptualization based on Indigenous Knowledges to which he has ancestral rights. I recognize that the circle plays a central role in the ontologies of my own English/Northwestern European, Scots, Irish, Norwegian and German ancestry.

Despite having participated in anti-oppression training since my student activist days, it was through coursework, learning from scholars and mentors, and reading widely through research and literature in my doctoral program that I came to understand the question that calls me relates to not what we need to know. Rather, it is more compelling to me to work to understand how immigrant-descendants like me and our immigrant colleagues approach the circle so that we can help one another shed our mental cages. Pursuing this awakening – and continually evolving – understanding, I read widely to situate and enlighten this work. Chapter Two documents the pathway I took through writing that documents and inspires reconciliation and the literature that informed philosophical and psycho-social dimensions as well, though it would be misleading to suggest that this pathway was straightforward.

What Could I Contribute?

Provoked by Ermine's (2007) observation that what is hidden and unknown to us will indeed affect the relationship that evolves between faculty and their students as they participate in reconciliation work in the academy, I developed a new research question that seemed to be an improvement on my first suggestion:

> How do immigrant-descendant and immigrant faculty conceive of themselves as they contemplate engagement in the consciousness-raising, ally work and institutional changes that are required as we walk in a new way with Indigenous Peoples?

Embracing that they are all called to stand in the circle surrounding reconciliation, it is my contention that exploring how immigrant-descendant and immigrant faculty are thinking and feeling as they approach this work will give us better insight into building respectful allyship for reconciliation in the academy, and ultimately in our broader communities. As I have noted previously, I am familiar with

many faculty members at the institution where I currently work who are eager to participate in reconciliation. Amongst these faculty members who are motivated to join the circle, I have observed much variability in their comfort with doing so. Amongst those whom I have observed who are more reluctant to join the circle, there is much variability in their reasons for hesitating. I am aware of a small number of faculty members who do not think reconciliation is their problem, and who might simply refuse to join the circle. Thus, while I understand that this cannot occur in isolation, I advocate that better understanding the perspectives of immigrant-descendants and immigrants and working through some of our knowledge gaps and worries first, can help us to shed our mental cages. That way, when we get to the circle will be more prepared to participate in dialogic, deliberative praxis, walking in new way together with Indigenous Peoples.

Over the course of conducting this research, I found an increasing number of scholarly works that address decolonization of curricula (Adebisi, 2016; Cross, et al., 2019; Kinloch & Pedro, 2014; Lamaire, 2020; Le Grange, 2016; Letsoalo & Pero, 2020; Swidrovich, 2020), but at the time I began this dissertation, I had found nothing that specifically addresses the challenge of responding to the Calls to Action that immigrant-descendant and immigrant faculty at Canadian post-secondary institutions must undertake. Just as I was writing Chapter Five I came across one article in which the authors, two immigrant-descendant scholars, described their personal experiences of facilitating “indigenization initiatives” (Pardy & Pardy, 2020, p. 231) in a Canadian post-secondary institution, concluding that there is a place for immigrant-descendants in the work of decolonizing work and that there is a long road ahead for substantive change. In the next chapter I present a survey of literature related to the topic of my research, intentionally ranging from philosophical to practical topics. Given the importance of self-understanding to my project, amongst these sources I interleave a narrative in which I express the feelings and conclusions that have resulted from my readings and suggest ongoing actions.

Challenged to clarify what would define success for me at the end of this study, I determined that I seek to contribute to the political agenda of reconciliation through the transformation of individuals, myself included. If this study only changes me, it will be as a drop of rain in a puddle. If it changes others, there will be more drops of rain in more puddles. Someday the puddles will overflow and join together in a vast river of positive change. It is my hope that this research will have significance in the localized setting in which it was undertaken by informing institutional approaches to supporting faculty, offer some insight into possibilities for other contexts and shine a light on the depth and breadth of work that must still be undertaken by us all in this long and essential journey.

How Could I Explore Faculty Experiences?

There are clearly limitations to the degree to which a single study such as this can achieve and with this in mind, I examined methodologies that would serve this vision. These are outlined in Chapter Three. They evolved over the course of my research, influenced by ongoing reflection on where I was on my personal journey as a researcher. I approached this research from an emerging understanding of my ontological stance as relativist and a tendency towards the epistemological perspective of constructivism, aligning with the interpretive paradigm. Having said this, I am by nature a pragmatist. While I considered a wide range of theoretical frameworks for this research, admittedly I was more interested in the insight they could offer than in their application. Should an outcome of this research produce a cogent theory, its elements will only be as valuable as they are ultimately useful. Critical theory and its associated critical-reflexive paradigm, particularly in its expression as feminist theory, also offer significant appeal to me, as their intentions are both political and transformative (Assalahi, 2015), reinforcing my aims in pursuing this research and my aims in much of my life.

Strega and Brown’s (2015) work on anti-oppressive research resonated strongly with me, building as it does from critical theory, but it opened a paradox for me that I had some difficulty with

throughout the research. I wished to explore the experience of those who would work alongside people who experience oppression today and its historical legacies. In order to illuminate how individuals can be supported to practice allyship, how might I inquire in a good way, rather than merely shining the light on the oppressors once more? Thus, this work becomes anti-oppressive in its political intent for emancipatory change, but seeks to do this by exploring what Ermine (2007) articulated as the "deeper level thoughts, interests and assumptions that will inevitably influence and animate the kind of relationship the two can have" (p. 195), focusing in this instance on immigrant-descendants and immigrants who are necessary in the circle surrounding reconciliation.

Reflecting on my continuing self-understanding as a researcher, at this point in my learning journey I situate myself as an emancipatory pragmatist, inspired by qualitative methodologies that seek deep understanding of complex experiences. Throughout this process, I returned to reflect on my growing understanding of critical theory generally and feminist theory particularly, and the notion of a critical-reflexive paradigm, concepts that are explored in Chapter Two. Although there is no single feminist methodology, feminist methodologies focus on surfacing issues of power, bias and oppression with the ultimate goals of equity and emancipation, sharing four key features: critical enquiry, voice, reflexivity and the ethic of care (Burns & Chantler, 2011). The commitment to privileging women's voices and experiences would therefore require my research to consider the primacy of the perspective of gender if it were to follow as feminist methodology. While I can imagine future research that does just that, I was drawn in this initial work to explore with a more heterogeneous group of participants.

Having conducted a mixed methods approach (Johnson & Onwuegebuzie, 2004; Smith, 1997) in the research I conducted for the fulfillment of my Master of Science degree, I first assumed that I would use this approach again, administering a quantitative survey tool, augmented by focus groups or individual interviews. My hope was that the survey data would provide a sense of the overall landscape

of faculty self-reported “deeper level thoughts, interests and assumptions” (Ermine, 2007, p. 195), expanded upon by the richness of the testaments of individuals. I abandoned this because the contemplation of a survey instrument into an area about which so little research has been conducted made more sense after the qualitative work has been done. It was somewhat antithetical, my professor noted in my first doctoral course, to consider a quantitative methodology when one sees oneself an interpretivist. That said, as I will return to in Chapter Six when offering suggestions for further research, I wonder whether there isn’t a place for the use of a survey tool that allows for voices to be heard in a different way in this type of work.

I then considered the constellation of action research approaches (Bonilla & Harris, 2011; Bray, et al., 2000; Noffke & Somekh, 2011; Reason & Bradbury, 2001). I found the engagement with participants enticing, aligning with the understanding of my role in this work as a co-investigator along with those who might be willing to participate. These methodologies tend to be best applied to exploration of praxis however, and while this is where my research may indeed take me in future, this is not where my current research interest in the experience of individuals is best served. While I am very excited about the possibilities of these methodologies for future research, in these early days as immigrant-descendants and immigrants approach reconciliation in Canada and the myriad complexities this entails, particularly understanding the power dynamics inherent in a post-secondary institution, it seemed clear to me that this research required a more intimate approach. I therefore settled on adopting a one-to-one method, where individual relational accountabilities (Wilson, 2008) between me as a researcher and my colleagues as participants in this work with me can be more directly considered.

The Indigenist Research Paradigm

In discussing my proposed research topic with a wide range of family, friends, students, faculty and professional colleagues I frequently found myself explaining that my research is not “Indigenous

research". Indigenous research can only be conducted by Indigenous Peoples (Boyd, 2014; Kovach, 2009; Martin & Mirraboopa, 2009; Rigney, 1999; Smith, 2012; West, 1998; Wilson, 2001, 2007, 2008).

For this research race matters. As an immigrant-descendant I am not carrying out Indigenous research, but I can conduct anti-oppressive research aligned with the Indigenist paradigm that Cree scholar Shawn Wilson invites Indigenous, immigrant-descendant and immigrant researchers to adopt (2007). Although my proposed research focused on the experience of immigrant-descendants and immigrants, in the context of engaging with Indigenous Peoples to walk forward in a new way together, it is singularly focused on the experiences on immigrant-descendants and immigrants. Wilson (2007, 2008) articulates that respect for relationship is fundamental to Indigenous ways of knowing and being, and it is this principle that defines the Indigenist research paradigm. With this approach in mind, Wilson argues that any researcher can undertake research that is founded on what he calls "relational accountability" (Wilson, 2008, p.71), asserting that it is, "…the choice to follow this paradigm, philosophy or world view that makes the research Indigenist, not the ethnic or racial identity of the researcher" (Wilson, 2007, p.194).

It is important to note that Wilson's notion of an Indigenist research paradigm (2007) is predicated on understanding of an Indigenous research paradigm defined by and for Indigenous scholars (Boyd, 2014; Kovach, 2009; Martin & Mirraboopa, 2009; Rigney, 1999; Smith, 2012; West, 1998; Wilson, 2008). Although the concepts of Indigenist research and Indigenous research are closely aligned, they differ in one critical respect. Indigenous scholars may interchange the terms as they see fit, but immigrant-descendants and immigrants can only claim alignment with an Indigenist research paradigm. Immigrant-descendants and immigrants who choose to follow this paradigm must respect that an Indigenous research paradigm belongs to Indigenous Peoples and that it is their purview to continue to examine, develop and offer an Indigenist research paradigm.

Acknowledging that Indigenous methodologies remain outside of the dominant paradigms of the academy, Kovach (2009) contextualizes them as outsiders to the insider methodologies of qualitative research. This observation prompted me to think of my own place as an outsider to Indigenous research. I read and re-read many sections of books by Wilson (2008) and Kovach (2009) on this topic, underlining a good deal and making notes in the margins, including identifying a number of points to which I intend to return in my continuing learning journey. While doing so, however, I was unable to find a place where either scholar was inviting immigrant-descendant and immigrant researchers like me to use an Indigenous research paradigm in contexts outside of conducting research with Indigenous Peoples or communities. Although my research is motivated about walking in a new way with Indigenous Peoples, it is focused on the particular experiences of immigrant-descendants and immigrants as participants situated in the dominant culture[2] as a door opens to them to join the circle surrounding the challenge of reconciliation. Applying an Indigenist research paradigm to this work did not ring true to me.

That was until I had the privilege of meeting Dr. Wilson. Engaged to work on a contract supporting Indigenous education planning at Royal Roads University, Dr. Wilson came to visit on two occasions in early 2020. At our first meeting, as a small group was getting to know one another, I briefly described my research to him and the conclusion I had drawn that it would not be appropriate for me to adopt an Indigenist research paradigm. He paused and then replied that in his view there was indeed room for applying an Indigenist research paradigm to other contexts (S. Wilson, personal

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[2] I use the phrase "dominant culture" throughout this paper adopting the definition that Wilson (2008) shares: "…the culture of European descended and Eurocentric, Christian, heterosexist, male-dominated Canada or Australia." (p. 35). While his work centred on the colonial history of these countries in particular, I use this term to refer to what might otherwise be referred to as "Western" culture more generally, borrowing Kovach's (2009) description of Western as "…a particular ontological, epistemological, sociological and ideological way of thinking and being as differentiated from Eastern or Indigenous worldview, and so forth" (p. 21).

communication, January 20, 2020). He noted that while he had written and spoken about research with Indigenous Peoples, the principles of the Indigenist research paradigm can be applied in almost any context, provided that this is done thoughtfully and respectfully. Based on reading his published works, the talks I had the privilege of attending during his visits and conversation with Dr. Wilson and his parents, Drs. Peggy and Stan Wilson who spent almost three months as members of the university community, I came to understand that the key feature of the Indigenist research paradigm is relational accountability. This concept emphasizes the integrity of relationships between and amongst people, the natural world, the spiritual realm and even ideas themselves, privileging respect for and responsibility to these relationships first and foremost. From this foundation, the Indigenist research paradigm interweaves axiology, ontology, epistemology and methodology in an interactive circle of mutually influencing and influenced aspects of research work. This holistic approach supports research activities that engage with people in ways that honour the relationship that the participants, including the researcher, have with one another, and with the ideas that are being explored. The principle purpose of research in an Indigenist research paradigm must be positive change, firstly for the participants. Drawing a parallel to critical theory and constructivism, Wilson writes,

> In both critical theory and constructivism, knowledge in itself is not seen as the ultimate goal, rather the goal is the change that this knowledge may help to bring about. Both paradigms share the axiology that research is not seen as worthy or ethical if it does not help to improve the reality of the research participants. (Wilson, 2008, p. 37)

Stories that we tell ourselves and others provide a way of hearing from someone with room for context and nuance and thus, as Kovach (2009) also advocates, offer a grounded approach to learning together as Wilson demonstrates through the conversations he reprises in his first book, *Research Is Ceremony* (2008).

Lastly, as the book title indicates, the Indigenist research paradigm considers that research is ceremony. Wilson (2008) states, “It is a ceremony for improving your relationship with an idea. It takes place every day and has taken place throughout our history” (p. 110). While again this is not to suggest that one can appropriate the ceremonial practices of another’s culture, it does open up the practice of research as thoughtful and careful acts that embody stages and considerations that are common to ceremonial practice in many cultures. Dr. Wilson described these stages of ceremony in a workshop he gave at Royal Roads University on February 2, 2020:

> ***Live a congruent lifestyle***. If you are going into a marriage, you would live a monogamous relationship before marriage. If you are conducting health research, you would want to live a healthy lifestyle. If you are conducting environmental research, you would want to live an environmentally responsible lifestyle.
>
> ***Prepare the space.*** Ask yourself, what do we need in this space in order to get ready to hold our ritual? Have you completed your ethics application? Does your voice recorder have batteries? Have you thought about how you will conduct yourself when you begin?
>
> ***Assemble***. Bring together actors or ingredients. Consider not just human actors, but what is more than human as well. Bring everything together deliberately and with intention.
>
> ***Engage in ritual***. This will be different for every type of research and will be adapted to the research. Jerry Saddleback (Cree Elder) explains that the reason you do things in a ceremony in a ritualized manner because if you can get everyone in this space thinking about the exact same thing at the exact same time, a miracle will happen – and the miracle we are looking for (usually is) enlightenment (if it all works). (S. Wilson, personal communication, February 2, 2020)

> ***Incorporate into your lifestyle***. There is no point in getting married if you're not going to change your behaviours. If your research doesn't change you, then you haven't done it right.

This workshop could not have come at a more opportune time for my research as I had yet to meet with my first participant. I thought of each of these stages and Dr. Wilson's words as I approached each of them – and each ritual of conversation or pause for self-reflection. They had a deep and profound impact on my attitude and thinking as the research progressed. Where these stages are referenced throughout this document they are distinguished by italics.

I was also reminded of a visit I once had with Kim Recalma-Clutesi (Kwaxkwaka'wakw) and the late Chief Adam Dick (Musgamagw Dzawada'enuxw) where they shared some teachings with my friends and me. Later I asked Kim about whether it was appropriate for me to use these. She responded that if the knowledge keeper gives permission to do so, it is acceptable to use the teaching, as long as it is attributed to the owner of that knowledge. After a brief pause, she added that it would be best for me to seek out the teachings of my own ancestors and to use them. This is an avenue I would like to pursue someday. Perhaps one way to help to lift up Indigenous methodologies, as Kovach (2009) exhorts us to do, and to foster resonance with Wilson's (2008) Indigenist research paradigm, would be to consider that it is not so far back in our own ancestries that my immigrant-descendant and immigrant colleagues and I may find many teachings that are complementary to Indigenous ways of knowing and being.

With this in mind, I found it helpful to consider that the Indigenist research paradigm shares many characteristics of narrative approaches generally and narrative inquiry specifically, in both the dominant culture and by Indigenous researchers. They are cognizant of the interplay of time, place and relationships, although the Indigenist research paradigm embeds the interrelationships of any and all aspects that might have influence in a given context, from the material to the metaphysical. These

approaches welcome change not only as they acknowledge it as a fundamental feature of the dynamic nature of knowing and being, but also as regards the approaches themselves. Researchers are encouraged to align to the principles that underpin it, rather than to a set formula of tasks. Wilson (2008) suggests that even use of the word “methods” to describe what is done to explore an area of inquiry can be replaced by strategies of inquiry, a choice I have made in this work. There is much in these perspectives that can assist in exploring our experiences as we approach the ally work that reconciliation requires of us, knowing too that we will all benefit from new, respectful ways of being together.

Research Activities: An Overview

To engage with individual faculty members about their personal experiences while at the same time advancing my own learning and development for ally work, I ultimately undertook an anti-oppressive research approach (Potts & Brown, 2015) seeking to embody the Indigenist research paradigm (Wilson, 2007, 2008). I gathered insights through two research activities simultaneously that allowed for relational accountability and responsiveness: conversations with faculty members that elicited stories and reflections using a narrative approach, and autoethnography. Including an intentional autoethnographic component in my research was inspired by the tremendous learning from the critical-reflexivity that I had experienced in the “aha” moments I described having through my relationship with Asma-na-hi Antoine (Toquaht). I am grateful for the continuing to learn from her and from the many Indigenous people with whom I am privileged be building relationships, especially Burt and Lee Charles (Scia’new), Butch Dick (Songhees), Shirley Alphonse (Cowichan/T’Sou-ke), Mary Ann Thomas (Esquimalt), Jessica Sault (Tseshaht), Russ Johnston (Neyaashiinigmiing) and my doctoral supervisor, Dr. Carmen Rodriguez de France (Kikapoo). These insights illuminated my ongoing personal

development, but also provided insight into the experience of immigrant-descendant and immigrant faculty members who participated in the research.

The research took place at Royal Roads University, the small university where I work in what is now referred to as British Columbia, Canada. Royal Roads has a complement of approximately 75 regular full-time faculty and more than 350 sessional instructors that deliver a range of applied and professional programs. Royal Roads occupies a unique niche in the Canadian post-secondary landscape as a public institution with a specific mandate to provide applied and professional programming (*Royal Roads University Act*, 1996). Typically, more than three quarters of the programming is targeted at the graduate level, most of which is delivered in a blended format, combining short-term intensive residencies with longer periods of online coursework. Further, the average student age at time of writing was 37 (Royal Roads University, 2021) and thus students are more likely to bring more life experience to learning environments than would be the case at a traditional post-secondary institution. Regrettably, there are no Indigenous full-time regular faculty members employed by the University and only three Indigenous employees whose roles are related to supporting Indigeneity in the institution, and only one of which is focused on Indigenous education.

The research focused on the experiences of regular full-time faculty at this institution. Fifteen regular full-time faculty members, all of whom had been employed by the institution for more than three years, participated in one-on-one conversations; eight of the participants joined in a group conversation that followed after member checking of key points and themes from each conversation was completed. Throughout the study, I recorded my autoethnographic observations for learning, summary and analysis using written notes, photographs, and musical references. This activity supported ongoing critical reflection of the work as it unfolded and provided cultural epiphanies that are also integrated with the insight garnered from my conversations with the participants.

As you read through this dissertation, I invite you to consider that I undertook this research with the intent of applying an anti-oppressive research approach and the Indigenist research paradigm, and thus have perhaps included more reflection of my own in the literature review as in Chapter Two or discussion of methodologies in Chapter Three than might normally be expected in a dissertation in the dominant culture. The findings of my research activities are presented in Chapter Four. Chapter Five summarizes ideas and concepts that took on meaning for me throughout this process and the enlightenment that resulted for me. In Chapter Six I come back to the questions I have posed here, but in reverse order, describing how I explored faculty experiences and the limitations of the results, what this might have contributed, along with recommendations for future research and action to carry with me, and some final reflections on the impact that this research has had on me.

Moving to the Circle

It was important to me to begin this research by situating who I am, to articulate why walking in new way forward with Indigenous Peoples is so important and to describe the role we all have to play in this process. In the overview of how ethical spaces of engagement can be created with the challenge of reconciliation in the middle that followed, I worked through my understanding of the inherent tensions of ethical spaces and some of the ways in which they can be mitigated so that true dialogue can occur. It is clear to me that Indigenous Peoples, immigrant-descendants, and immigrants living in this land we now call Canada are all called to join the circle surrounding reconciliation. While that circle needs us all, I do believe there is work that we as immigrant-descendants and immigrants can do on our own, whilst connected to the larger circle, to break down our mental cages so we can be better friends in walking in a new way forward. This research was undertaken as one small contribution to supporting immigrant-descendants and immigrant faculty as educators and influencers for positive change in the work of reconciliation and our long journey ahead.

Chapter Two: Mess-finding through the Literature

Reviewing the literature as this research evolved led me to a wide range of disciplinary, interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary work, reading widely to capture a range of perspectives and research methodologies, methods and results. Following many different pathways in this process, sometimes seemingly disjointed or drawing me further away from my intended focus, I was frequently reminded of oft-cited quote from J.R.R. Tolkein's novel *The Fellowship of the Ring* that, "Not all those who wander are lost" (Tolkein, 1999, p.224). As noted in Chapter One, because I undertook this research with the intent of applying an anti-oppressive research approach and the Indigenist research paradigm, I have included more reflection of my own in this chapter than might normally be found in a literature review expected in a dissertation in the dominant culture. This is consistent with the anti-oppressive research approach wherein Potts and Brown (2015) encourage researchers to engage in "mess-finding" (p. 23) as the first stage of the research process. By exploring the literature of theory and practice, I was challenged to clarify my purpose and intention and to prepare myself before assembling the research and thus this became part of the *live a congruent lifestyle* and *prepare the space* stages of research as ceremony that Wilson (S. Wilson, personal communication, February 2, 2020) described as well. I invite you, the reader, to wander with me through the pages of this chapter in hopes that by the end you will agree that there is good reason to continue this journey.

Much of the academic literature published on reconciliation related to post-secondary education has been written by Indigenous scholars addressing what Habermas (1984) calls "cognitive-instrumental rationality" (p.238). The focus in these articles is largely on whether action is appropriate to the end goal, rather than the "practical rationality" (p.238) that questions the goal itself. Indigenous scholars are keenly aware of the pressing needs that Indigenous Peoples face today, with lagging educational attainment among the most important of these the consequence of centuries of oppression,

genocide, and intergenerational trauma (Gordon & White, 2014; Olsen Harper & Thompson, 2017). There is a growing body of cognitive-instrumental rationality work that exposits on conditions for Indigenous student access and success and curriculum development and instruction for Indigenous students, written by Indigenous scholars and those who are immigrant-descendants and immigrants. (Altamirano-Jimenez, 2014; de Leeuw, Greenwood & Lindsay, 2013; Kerr, 2014; McGonegal, 2009; Mihesuah & Wilson, 2004; Restoule et al., 2013; Smith, 2017). Likewise, since I began my doctoral work in 2017 I have observed an increase in the number of scholarly articles that explore ways in which curriculum for a wide range of courses can be evolved to include Indigenous ontologies, epistemologies, histories and perspectives (Cross et al., 2019; Levac et al., 2018; McGibbon et al., 2014; Root et al., 2019; Swidrovich, 2020).

At the time of writing I have been able to find only a few scholarly articles that specifically interrogate how immigrant-descendants and immigrants might approach engagement in reconciliation in post-secondary settings (Haig Brown, 2008; Haig Brown, 2010; Weiler, 2017; Pardy & Pardy, 2020; Spanierman & Smith, 2017) and none that address the situation of immigrant-descendant and immigrant post-secondary faculty members. While there is good work being done to explore preparing elementary and secondary school teachers to enact the Calls to Action through faculties of education in countries where there are histories of oppressed Indigenous Peoples, notably in Australia, New Zealand, South Africa as well as Canada (Aitken & Radford, 2018; Burridge, et al., 2012; Kerr, 2014; Kerr & Parent, 2018; Lamaire, 2020; Madden, 2015; Martin et al., 2017; Purton et al., 2020; Rodriguez de France, 2018; Steinhauer et al., 2020; Whitinui et al., 2018), I could find nothing that described the same for preparing post-secondary faculty members for similar work.

A few works of practical rationality that question the end goal of reconciliation authored by Indigenous and immigrant-descendant or immigrant scholars emerged in my search of the literature.

Many of these challenge the commonly held assumption that reconciliation is only about improving educational attainment for Indigenous Peoples (Darlaston-Jones et Al., 2017; de Costa & Clark, 2016; Green & Sonn, 2006; Regan, 2010). One of the most impactful for me in my learning journey has been Regan's provocatively titled, *Unsettling the settler within* (2010), written before the release of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Report. Regan advocates pedagogy that disturbs her characterization of our comfortable assumptions of what she calls the peacemaker myth in the dominant Canadian consciousness, charging us to seek truth before we rush to reconciliation. Examining the influence of race in post-secondary environmental education, McLean (2013) found students held this paradigm central to their conceptualization of Canadian identity. It may be uncomfortable for many of us to challenge this, but I believe that we have a clear duty to explore what it means to be an immigrant-descendant or immigrant who benefits from colonialism regardless of how detached we might imagine we are from its origins. In my opinion, addressing this is perhaps the most important task we immigrant-descendants and immigrants must undertake if we are to create ethical spaces for engagement to find new ways to be together.

This chapter is presented in sections that imply sequential thinking, but this is not a true characterization of the way in which my exploration of sources unfolded over the course of the research. It does however present some rough groupings of ideas that were foundational and/or provocative. Before I began to narrow the focus of my research, I sought first to locate my work the context of the challenge of reconciliation in the lands we now call Canada. Having determined that I wanted to do something that might make a difference as a member of the circle surrounding reconciliation, I then explored why this is important through the philosophical underpinnings of a context in which this work might proceed in a good way, approaching the cognitive-instrumental rationality that Habermas (1984) identified. Working from the general nature of engagement to the specific role of individuals in the circle surrounding reconciliation, this brought me to conclude the

chapter with more cognitive-instrumental works that suggest ways that immigrant-descendants and immigrants can contribute to making the circle surrounding reconciliation the ethical space for engagement that Ermine asks us to consider.

Reconciling Reconciliation

Acknowledging that Indigenous Peoples have lived in the lands we now call Canada since time immemorial, the story that precedes the release of the Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission goes back hundreds of years to the first visitors who came from Europe. Although at one time I thought that focusing on the history of the post-contact experience of Indigenous Peoples would be most important, I now understand that more recent events perhaps have more influence on the lived experience of contemporary immigrant-descendants and immigrants as we approach the circle. I summarize these events in order to provide context for the current discourse on reconciliation and grounding for my motivation to conduct this research.

What came to be known as the Oka Crisis of 1989 was a defining moment for Indigenous rights in the lands we now call Canada. The Kanestake Nation objected to a plan approved by the municipality of Oka, Quebec for a private developer to construct homes on land that is sacred to the Nation. An armed stand-off between members of the Kanestake, Kahnawake and Akwesasne Nations and police carried on for 79 days, climaxing with the death of a provincial police officer. The federal government intervened to purchase the land and the development was scuttled, seemingly ending the Oka Crisis. Not surprisingly the Oka Crisis attracted significant media attention and exposed a great deal about the plight - and the resilience - of Indigenous Peoples of Canada. As the relationship with Indigenous Peoples has been governed by the *Indian Act* since 1876 (Joseph, 2018), the federal government could not ignore that all was not well and that it had a role to play in fixing things. The first significant national examination of the state of Indigenous Peoples in Canada in the 20th century was launched as a result in

1990 with the establishment of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples. After several years of inquiry and deliberation, the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples issued its report in 1996, the year that the last Indian Residential School closed (Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1996). The Royal Commission's report and its 440 recommendations for change sparked the release of *Gathering Strength: Canada's Aboriginal Action Plan* (1997), including a Statement of Reconciliation. This Statement concludes that:

> Reconciliation is an ongoing process. In renewing our partnership, we must ensure that the mistakes which marked our past relationship are not repeated. The Government of Canada recognizes that policies that sought to assimilate Aboriginal people, women and men, were not the way to build a strong country. We must instead continue to find ways in which Aboriginal people can participate fully in the economic, political, cultural and social life of Canada in a manner which preserves and enhances the collective identities of Aboriginal communities, and allows them to evolve and flourish in the future. Working together to achieve our shared goals will benefit all Canadians, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal alike. (p.3)

It is notable that this first description of reconciliation by the Canadian government, arising from many years of listening to Indigenous Peoples, immigrant-descendants and immigrants through the Royal Commission and other venues, was unequivocal that reconciliation is a process of engagement of all for the good of all.

The promises of this *Action Plan*, combined with the persistence of Indigenous advocates, opened the door for many Indian Residential School survivors to come forward to demand compensation for the atrocities they endured in the government-sponsored system. The Office of Indian Residential Schools Resolution Canada was established in 2001 and an Alternative Dispute Resolution

process was launched to manage the growing number of claims. Individual and class action claims rose to as many as 70,000 before the Indian Residential School Settlement Agreement (IRSSA) was announced in 2007 (Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, 2017). The IRSSA committed to five major components: Common Experience Payment, Independent Assessment Process, Indian Residential School Truth and Reconciliation Commission, Health and Healing Services, and Commemorative Fund. On June 11, 2008, then Prime Minister Stephen Harper read a landmark statement of apology to the survivors of Indian Residential Schools on behalf of the Government of Canada in the House of Commons (Government of Canada, 2008). The statement ended with reference to launching the Indian Residential School Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

The Mandate of the Indian Residential School Truth and Reconciliation Commission was articulated as Schedule N of the IRSSA (Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 2015a). The preamble states in part: "This is a profound commitment to establishing new relationships embedded in mutual recognition and respect that will forge a brighter future" (p. 339). In setting out the principles for the Commission, the Mandate concludes with reference to it being "…forward looking in terms of rebuilding and renewing Aboriginal relationships and the relationship between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Canadians" (p. 339). The emphasis for this reconciliation work was clearly on renewing the relationship between Indigenous Peoples and those of us who are not Indigenous to the lands we now call Canada.

The Commission issued an interim report in 2012 and its final report in 2015 (Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 2015a), both of which shone penetrating light on the horrors of Indian Residential Schools and their profoundly destructive aftermath. The Report's Calls to Action include 94 activities that the Commission enjoined a wide range of organizations to initiate. It is notable that the introduction to the Report's summary begins with examining the word reconciliation. The interpretation derived by parsing the word as "re-conciliation" to refer to the return to friendlier times, is noted and

set aside, acknowledging the contention held by many Indigenous Peoples that there were no such times. Rather, the Commission adopts the interpretation that likens reconciliation to "…coming to terms with events of the past in a manner that overcomes conflict and establishes a respectful and healthy relationship among people, going forward" (p. 6). Referencing the metaphor of family violence, the Commission echoes the theme of relationship, but does not shy away from the damages of the past and the intergenerational impacts these have had on thousands of Indigenous people and their families. Throughout this foundational section of the Report the description of reconciliation as a new way forward for Indigenous Peoples with immigrant-descendants and immigrants is repeated, exemplified by this passage:

> Reconciliation must support Aboriginal Peoples as they heal from the destructive legacies of colonialism that have wrecked such havoc in their lives. But it must do even more. Reconciliation must inspire Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Peoples to transform Canadian society so that our children and grandchildren can live together in dignity, peace and prosperity on these lands we now share. (Truth & Reconciliation Commission, 2015, p. 8)

Based on these readings, it is clear to me that we must therefore stand together. How we undertake to do so in a good way presents a challenge to immigrant-descendants and immigrants. We cannot replicate the mistakes of the past by invoking the privilege of the dominant culture to fix things in the same ways that thought we were fixing things in the past.

Calling to Us All

To achieve the vision that the Commission sets out, I was inspired to examine axiological assumptions. Indigenous Peoples can turn to their traditional teachings to guide their individual and collective positions, interpretations and responses. For those of us whose ancestors come from other

places and whose collective immigrant culture now dominates Canadian discourse, while we may appreciate their teachings, they are not ours to assume without specific invitation. While Wilson (2007) advocates that we can adopt an Indigenist paradigm when we conduct research, it is important to stress that such a paradigm refers to the way in which we approach research and does not give license to appropriate Indigenous knowledge or culture.

We can however turn to thinkers who have contributed to discourses that challenge our dominant culture to transform society. I explored three preeminent 20th century philosophers, Dewey, Freire, and Habermas, to locate reconciliation as emancipatory and I surmise here the aspects of the work of these theorists that I have found helpful in providing a theoretical framework for why immigrant-descendants and immigrants should engage in reconciliation. I have chosen these three thinkers as influencers of dominant contemporary culture that formed the context for my own development and of the research participants but recognize that there are many other paths that one might follow to consider our axiological assumptions.

Writing on the eve of WWII, Dewey (1939) asserted that “the task of democracy is forever that of creation of a freer and more humane experience in which all share and to which all contribute” (p.229). Having followed a path in my review of the literature on what is commonly referred to as *social justice,* (Bankston, 2010; Haeffele & Storr, 2019; Jackson, 2005; Liboro, 2015; Reisch, 2002; Vallier, 2019), this statement encapsulates what I understand to be the practical rationality of social justice and thus how I choose to define it. This was a path that had many enticing branches, but having this crystallization that resonated for me, I left these for future exploration.

Dewey asserted that there is no *telos*, no inherently intrinsic value in an aim or position, rejecting that there is one right way to achieve the expression of what is good. Instead Dewey

contended that what is good is what works. What works therefore is that which fosters "..a freer and more humane experience in which all share and to which all contribute" (Dewey, 1939, p.229). I suspect that this orientation to pragmatism may be our best bet as we approach the challenge of reconciliation on so many fronts and from so many perspectives. Reflecting on Dewey's work from the perspective of the 21st century and the legacies of colonialism, Hytten (2009) notes that Dewey further argued, "…that democracy must emerge from the concerns, values, habits and practices of cultural groups. It is never something that can be imposed from above or achieved through nondemocratic means, such as economic colonization or unjust war" (p.397). If as Indigenous Peoples, immigrant-descendants and immigrants together we are to achieve the vision of a reconciled Canada where this "freer and more humane experience in which all share and to which all contribute" (Dewey, 1939, p.229) exists, the "concerns, values, habits and practices" (Hytten, 2009, p. 397) of Indigenous Peoples, immigrant-descendants and immigrants together must therefore allow it to emerge. This is the vision the Commission set out for our children and grandchildren.

In his seminal work, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Freire (1970/2005) begins the first chapter with the statement that "…the problem of humanization has always, from an axiological point of view, been humankind's central problem," (Freire, 1970/2000, p. 43) adding that "Concern for humanization leads at once to the recognition of dehumanization, not only as an ontological possibility but as an historical reality" (p. 43). He further asserts that humanness can only be complete when people are made free by being liberated from oppression. Freire defines oppression as, "Any situation in which A objectively exploits B or hinders his pursuit of self-affirmation as a responsible person…" (p. 55) and makes clear that, "Such a situation in itself constitutes violence, even when sweetened by false generosity, because it interferes with the individual's ontological and historical vocation to be more fully human" (p.55).

History and Humanization

Canada was founded on the dehumanization and oppression of Indigenous Peoples. From the arrival of the very first visitors, the humanness of Indigenous Peoples whose ancestors had lived in these lands since time immemorial was denied, legitimated by the doctrine of discovery promulgated by the Catholic Church and European monarchies beginning in the 15th century (Joseph & Joseph, 2012). The doctrine of discovery held that land not occupied by Christians was *terra nullius* – empty land. What could be more dehumanizing than being subject to the belief that you did not exist on the lands where you had lived your entire life and where every single one of your ancestors had lived since time immemorial? Additionally, the prevailing Regalian doctrine presumed that the so-called discovered lands were the property of the rulers of the visitors' homelands and thus were theirs to do with as they pleased (Joseph & Joseph, 2012). These early visitors would not have survived without the help of the Indigenous Peoples they first encountered, and there were positive alliances and integration of cultures that produced the Métis Nation.

During the 19th century more and more visitors arrived who intended to stay, and Indigenous Peoples were forcibly evicted from their ancestral lands as immigrant colonies were established. These doctrines reinforced the assumption that the colonists' culture and belief systems were superior to those of Indigenous Peoples. Pernicious words spoken in the early days of the House of Commons by Canada's first Prime Minister Sir John A. Macdonald, and even into the 20th century by Duncan Campbell Scott, who from 1913 to 1932 held the position of Deputy General Superintendent of Indian Affairs, were testament to this. In reference to a proposed amendment to the *Indian Act* presented to the House of Commons in 1916, Scott is infamously quoted as saying, "The purpose of the Amendment to the Act was to prevent the Indians from being exploited as a savage or semi-savage race, when the whole of the administrative force of the Department is endeavoring to civilize them" (Joseph, 2016,

p.126). The harsh truths that emerged through the work of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission have made the dehumanization of Indigenous Peoples patently evident. There is no question that there is a great deal to be done for Indigenous Peoples to be liberated from the devastating impacts of colonialism.

At the same time, what may be surprising is that, for a new relationship to emerge between Indigenous Peoples, immigrant-descendants, and immigrants, those of us who represent the oppressors must also be humanized. Freire's (1970/2000) conceptualization of the problem of humanization does not stop with liberating those who have been oppressed. He asserted that the oppressors must be liberated from the mental cages that Ermine (2007) described, noting that "Dehumanization, which marks not only those whose humanity has been stolen, but also (though in a different way) those who have stolen it, is a distortion of the vocation of becoming more fully human" (p. 44). Reconciliation is clearly a problem of humanization.

Arguably one of the greatest barriers to this is the difficulty that many immigrant-descendants and immigrants have in accepting that colonization is alive and well. Irrespective of whether our ancestors arrived in these lands in the 15th century or yesterday, it is clear to me that those of us who are immigrant-descendants and immigrants continue to benefit from it at the cost of Indigenous Peoples. The oppressed cannot be unaware of what it means to be oppressed, but the privileged can certainly be unaware that they enjoy privilege (Kraemer, 2007). We live and work in unceded lands, and in places where treaties were negotiated but are capriciously interpreted. Our governments are funded by taxation of places and profits that are derived from these lands and their resources. Moreover, we allow our governments to choose priorities other than addressing the needs of Indigenous Peoples and engage in arguments about whose responsibility it is that many Indigenous communities live in deplorable conditions, deprived of even basic housing, health care and education. For example, there

were 150 drinking water advisories in Indigenous communities in Canada in 2017, and of these, just under half had been in place for over a year (McDiarmid, 2017). In the Canadian federal election of October 2019, it was telling that that party leaders were still calling for the end to this (Mike & Cheung, 2019). In another tragic example, it was only after the shocking death of five-year old Jordan River Anderson (Norway House Cree Nation) in 2004, the result of an inter-governmental dispute about who should pay for the care he needed while his condition deteriorated, that the Government of Canada committed to Jordan's Principle. Jordan's Principle pledges that Indigenous children will be provided the care that they need when they need it, irrespective of jurisdictional issues that may arise (Government of Canada, n.d.). While immigrant-descendants and immigrants may not actively participate as individuals in exploiting or interfering with the self-direction of Indigenous Peoples, we are complicit in the systems that our dominant culture perpetuates.

In the Circle Together

Having considered the axiological context for reconciliation, I am further convinced of the imperative for a circle of Indigenous Peoples, immigrant-descendants and immigrants standing together to surround reconciliation as a challenge in the pursuit of democracy, humanization, and freedom for all. I have also identified the influence of Ermine's notion of an ethical space of engagement (2007) on my thinking about the conditions in which this might occur and alluded to some of the challenges he identifies. Freire coined the term "praxis" to describe the exercise of our own power to act against oppression, observing that social transformation results from the collective expression of praxis (1970/2000). In Freire's conceptualization of praxis, action does not emerge in isolation, however. Freire believed in the necessity of an ongoing cycle of action and reflection. Thus, reconciliation can be framed as a humanization problem around which Freire too invites us to join the circle as an expression of praxis to transform our world.

Reviewing models of democracy in contemporary society, Habermas (1994) defines traditional liberal and republican models of democracy as “received democracy” (p.1), democracy that is done for us, having abrogated our responsibility to participate in true decision-making to the structures of political parties and the public service. He contrasts these two models but finds that neither is satisfactory because neither is truly representative of the people. He contends that liberal democracy appeals to the application of some higher reason that is assumed to be shared by the people while republican democracy is based on the political will of the day, noting that, “The former approach views the citizenry as a collective actor that reflects the whole and acts for it; in the latter, individual actors function as dependent variables in system processes that move along blindly” (Habermas, 1994; p. 8). In response, Habermas (1994) offers a deliberative rather than received model of democracy, the discourse-theoretic model. This is model is deliberative in that it is predicated on the equitable participation of all people in dialogue, simultaneously concerned with the individual and the collective in context, and which privileges no higher power or reason. He describes this as follows:

> Discourse theory takes elements from both sides and integrates these in the concept of an ideal procedure for deliberation and decision-making. Weaving together pragmatic considerations, compromises, discourses of self-understanding and justice, this democratic procedure grounds the presumption that reasonable or fair results are obtained. According to this proceduralist view, practical reason withdraws from universal human rights, or from the concrete ethical substance of a specific community, into the rules of discourse and forms of argumentation. In the final analysis, the normative content arises from the very structure of communicative actions. These descriptions of the democratic process set the stage for different conceptualizations of state and society. (Habermas, 1994, p. 6)

While he acknowledges that achieving this is an ideal to which humans can aspire, Habermas cautions that our current models of democracy do less to serve this than one which is founded on the ongoing discourse amongst diverse peoples. Habermas later summarized the outcome of such an approach to the challenge of democracy, stating that “Freedom conceived intersubjectively distinguishes itself from the arbitrary freedom of the isolated individual. No one is free until we are all free” (Habermas, 2002, p.82). In the tradition of Dewey and Freire, Habermas too declares the necessity of shared engagement in determining our social context together and thus the circle surrounding reconciliation requires us all. His emphasis on discourse as the way to achieve the best outcomes lead to another area of the literature that has contributed to the evolution of my understanding of this work.

I next considered models of engagement to explore further insight into the tensions inherent in such venues and how these might be mitigated, moving from the abstract to the concrete to ground my analysis in theory that ultimately led to notions that I wanted to explore with my research participants. Looking through the lenses of participatory emancipation that I turned to in Dewey, Freire and Habermas, the models of engagement I explored are all rooted in the concept of dialogic interaction, interaction based on linguistic exchange. This focus on the dialogic seeks to set the stage for considering how interacting with only some members of the circle first will allow for true dialogue that will ultimately contribute to the authentic engagement of the whole.

Embracing Ermine’s (2007) assertion that we must free ourselves of the mental cages that constrain our ability to engage in ethical spaces, I found that Freire’s concept of conscientization offers insight into one way we can begin to do so. Freire first described conscientization, or “critical consciousness” as it has been popularized in English, in his 1968 essay “Education as the Practice of Freedom”, published in English in *Education for Critical Consciousness* in 1973 (Freire, 1973). He explained that critical consciousness requires us to see our place in the world from social and political

perspectives, with each person taking an active role in creating democratic structures. This starts by recognizing how our individual problems or privileges are influenced by and interconnected with structures of power. Drawing from Hegel, Freire (1970/2000) espoused the benefits of the dialectic process, the exchange of ideas related to two opposing paradigms (Mautner, 2005), as an approach to exposing our assumptions about who we are and the agency we have in liberating ourselves. In this context, the tensions between two conflicting positions, thesis and antithesis, are negotiated by working towards rejecting positions or achieving a synthesis, so that the positions are settled on a common ground (Mautner, 2005). Critics of this approach however observe that it relies upon the explicit meaning of statements, leaving no room to account for implicit intentions (Ingram, 2010; Sennet, 2012). Furthermore, they contend that the adversarial approach that has as its end goal rejection of positions and synthesis ultimately results in one position that takes primacy, with the unified result less than the sum of its parts (Sennet, 2012). Thus, a dialectical approach may be better suited to situations where there are clear positions and the focus of the dialectic exchange is more objective and impersonal than subjective and emotional. While Freire's concept of critical consciousness resonates with Ermine's challenge of shedding our mental cages, the complexities of the work of reconciliation perhaps make it less appropriate to adopt a dialectic approach to engaging around its myriad issues and the subjectivities that can be expressed by all in the circle. Recalling Freire's concept of praxis (1970/2000), a combination of action and reflection are necessary in spaces of engagement. That said, Freire's concept of critical consciousness has tremendous potential to support authentic dialogue by inviting participants in the circle to do some homework before they arrive, reflecting, acting, and reflecting again and again, accepting that this process will be unending.

Communication for Positive Change

In his communicative action theory, Habermas (1984) moved forward from the dialectic approach, proposing that mutual understanding and shared action can result from discussion and argumentation that allows for self-reflection. Fundamental to true communication is the application of the principle of discourse ethics which he explains requires that “only those norms can claim to be valid that meet (or could meet) with the approval of all affected in their capacity as participants in a practical discourse” (Habermas, 1990, p. 197). Thus, for Habermas, if people are to truly communicate, there needs to be a level playing field where the norms are determined by the entire circle and so there can be no power differentials amongst participants. Habermas saw communication as an interpretive process that situates individuals in a holistic context, where the context and the interpretation are revealed through dialogue. This draws upon hermeneutics, the theory that knowledge can be obtained through interpretation of socio-cultural experiences, achieved through commitment “to listen intently to what is communicated in order to gain insight from, or become aware of, a message hidden under the surface” (Mautner, 2005, p. 275). Habermas also distinguished between three types of knowledge that he identified as the objectives of communication: technical knowledge centred on influence over things and events; practical knowledge centred on understanding between people to reach consensus and create community; emancipatory knowledge centred on seeing oneself in the socio-cultural context achieved through self-reflection (Habermas, 1971). Drawing from Habermas then, to mitigate the tensions inherent in the ethical space of the circle surrounding reconciliation, it seems clear to me that we need to open up dialogue without the confounds of power differentials as we listen for more than just the denotation of the language used and consider the connotations and subtleties of what is both said and unsaid.

Habermas (1989) suggests that the "public sphere" should be a place where all are able to express their views and thereby engage in true democracy. According to Habermas, individuals exist in a *lifeworld* constructed by the shared norms and values that emerge through interactions and communications that individuals experience. At the same time, political and economic structures perpetuate power and economic control through objective systems which do not require interpretation, such as bureaucratic power and money. Habermas cautions that systems increasingly intervene in lifeworlds to limit interactions and communications and in so doing resist change and preserve those very same systems. This infiltration of systems in the lifeworld perpetuates their existence by restricting access to alternative perspectives, numbing people into complacency, and feeding oppression. He notes that hierarchical systems interfere with communication as the tensions created by imbalances of power do not allow for true meaning-making between people. To create a new public sphere, Habermas draws on historical analysis of the conditions that gave rise to the current public sphere. Reflecting on the influence of the salons, coffee houses and literary societies of the 19th century that he contends propelled the creation of our current context, Habermas believes that we need to find spaces where discourses can occur that disregard status, identify common concerns and are inclusive of diverse perspectives. Thus, to make real positive change breaking free from the infiltration of the self-perpetuating systems, it is necessary to transform the public sphere by working to find spaces where hierarchy does not intervene, where there is shared interest and where diverse perspectives are aired, attending to those that have been oppressed. Consequently, setting up contexts for people to come together around the challenge of reconciliation that are sensitive to hierarchies, focus on a shared interest and invite diverse perspectives might help to reduce the unease that is inherent in contexts that do not share these qualities.

Cooperation and Critical Skills

In his exploration of what he observes as the decline of cooperation in contemporary society, Sennett (2012) proposes that cooperation is directly impacted by our relative experiences of autonomy and competition. He notes that from the time all people are small children we struggle with achieving balance between autonomy and dependence, suggesting that we can experience loss of inherent integrity when another engages with us as the intrusion of the other breaks through the border of our psyche with the invitation of assistance or cooperation. Cooperation, he notes however, is ingrained in our evolutionary biology because we need to work with others for safety, food, and social cohesion. Sennett suggests that we need to balance autonomy and cooperation, and cooperation and competition to maintain our integral selves while getting along in the world, instrumentally and socially. When we are with people who are not like us, the skills we need to call upon for cooperation are much more important, and this is especially so when we are in difficult contexts that call upon us to work together. In our diverse circle surrounding reconciliation, we are indeed with people who are not like us. Sennet presents three critical social skills introduced as the polarities of dialectic versus dialogic interchange, declarative versus subjunctive expression, and sympathy versus empathy, that he contends lessen the potential challenges of these settings. Here the word "critical" is used as a synonym for words like important or essential.

As he regards the dialectic versus the dialogic, Sennett (2012) argues that the dialectic process is less helpful in difficult contexts that have many layers and nuances than the dialogic process of sustained interaction that Habermas (1989) promoted. The dialectic process invites competition in the form of debate over ideas while the dialogic seeks to find cooperation through their exposition, adding the hermeneutic exercise of interpretation of connotation, structure of language and the influence of the environment in which the interaction occurs. He also suggests that because of the presence of

power in virtually every context, the dialogic process is less complicated by the dynamics of power as it does not rely on winners and losers as points are made through discourse, though he notes that it would be naïve to consider that it is possible to entirely erase its presence and influence in dialogic contexts. The dialogic approach again emerges as one way that the tensions of spaces of engagement can be mitigated.

Considering the ways in which language is used in this preferred dialogic context, Sennett (2012) goes on to observe that declarative approaches that communicate seemingly unequivocal positions are less helpful than subjunctive expressions that leave room for the possibility of another interpretation. It is not hard to imagine that a subjunctive statement that I might make, such as “In the complex context of the history of Indigenous Peoples of Canada and our relationship with them, I’m wondering why it is that immigrant-descendants and immigrants like me sometimes have difficulty with getting involved in reconciliation work” would be better received than a declarative statement that I might make such as “Immigrant-descendants and immigrants are reluctant to participate in reconciliation.” Encouraging subjunctive dialogue may provide another tool to diminish the awkwardness that can occur as we come together from differing backgrounds and perspectives.

The distinction between sympathy and empathy provides insight into ways in which spaces of engagement can be more conducive to cooperation. Sennet (2012) notes that sympathy implies that one puts oneself in the place of the other, identifying with the other’s experience as if living it oneself. Inherent in this he argues is the egocentric assumption that it is possible for us to truly understand and feel what another person feels, taking a position of power over the other who needs our pity. Rather, Sennett encourages the adoption of empathy, the perspective of curiosity about the other person’s experience that requires being with the other person, rather than being the other person. Freire too wrote of the danger of sympathy, arguing that it is the root of the deficit perspective that sees those

who are not in the dominant culture as inferior and needing the help of those who are, rather than equal partners in their shared liberation (Freire, 1970/2000). Commenting on the expression of sympathy for Indigenous Peoples of Canada, Ralston Saul (2014) declares, “When it comes to aboriginal peoples, sympathy from outsiders is the new form of racism. Sympathy is a way to deny our shared reality…our shared responsibility” (p. 14).

Change in Complexity

Shifting to consider more concrete models of engagement in which the preceding conceptualizations of the nature of positive engagement might be manifested, I found the Cynefin framework helpful in suggesting what a constructive process might look like in a specific context (Snowden & Boone, 2007). This framework suggests a contextual model of engagement where the challenge is first assessed as simple, complicated, complex, or chaotic. Describing the complex context as characterized by “flux and unpredictability, no right answers, emergent instructive patterns, unknown unknowns, many competing ideas, a need for creative and innovative approaches and pattern-based leadership” (p.73), it is clear that the circle surrounding the challenge of reconciliation is complex. In complex contexts, participants are encouraged to “probe, sense and respond, create environments and experiments that allow patterns to emerge, increase levels of interaction and communication, and use methods that generate ideas” (p.73). It is held that this approach reduces tensions between participants in a complex context by beginning from a place of curiosity, creating safe spaces for trial and error and building relationships between people who can focus on ideas they generate together. It seems to me that if we imagine an ethical space in the middle of the circle where reconciliation is approached in this fashion it is possible to see how this dialogic model would be more conducive to true communication.

Advocating an approach to collective engagement around complex problems that eschews assumptions inherent in dominant models, Wheatley and Frieze (2011) describe seven conditions that

are more likely to result in positive change, deduced from experiences they describe in seven different real-world contexts. They suggest that the tensions inherent in dominant models are addressed when we shift our thinking "scaling up to scaling across" (p.20), "power to play" (p.50), "problem to place" (p. 74), "efficiency to resilience" (p. 102), "transacting to gifting" (p.130), "intervention to friendship" (p.160) and "hero to host" (p.188). Instead of engaging around a problem with the intent to find a solution that can be scaled up for efficiency they argue, we should be thinking about how what works in one context might be adapted or scaled across contexts for the specific needs of a place and time. They contend that focusing more on the sustainability of a solution in context promotes resiliency that pays off greater dividends than outcomes that might be efficient, but not necessarily effective or ongoing. The ways in which we approach these objectives of engagement matter, according to Wheatley and Frieze (2011). Acknowledging the issues of power that Freire and Habermas identified, they suggest that instead of acting as heroes, those of us from the dominant culture might consider how can instead take turns to host opportunities to be together where the only objective is to play with ideas, creating opportunities for dialogue and relationship building. Similarly, they advocate that we need to be less worried about settling the ledger of give and take and care more about what we can give in friendship. Such giving does not only have to mean material gifts, but as importantly can speak to willingness to let go of our egos, worldviews and positions. In keeping with the previously noted admonitions against the self-righteousness than can come from sympathy and pity, this is not to suggest that giving up our dominant ways is a gift to others less fortunate than us, but rather that it can be a gift to ourselves. Drawing upon these conditions for engagement can help us to reduce the tensions inherent in the circle surrounding reconciliation and open an ethical space for both true communication and shared action – the praxis that Freire (1970/2000) summons us to exercise.

Ally Work in Progress

Moving to the more concrete context of people from dominant cultural identities standing with people who have been oppressed in the pursuit of shared liberation, the ally model of engagement provides specific direction for addressing the tensions in the circle surrounding reconciliation. There are many definitions of the word ally as a noun. These typically describe an ally as someone who understands their place of privilege and works with members of an oppressed group to make positive change for the oppressed principally, and everyone else as a result (Bishop, 2015; Patton & Bondi, 2015; Reynolds, 2013; Russell, 2011; Spanierman & Smith, 2017). Bishop (2015) however contends that we are better advised to frame this type of engagement as action, using it as an adverb to modify praxis and calling what happens in ethical spaces of engagement "ally work". While other literature I sourced describes being an ally or participating in ally work, Bishop was the only author I was able to find who clearly articulates how one goes about becoming an ally, emphasizing that becoming is an unending process. It is in her description of this process that I found the most helpful direction on how to mitigate the tensions that are inherent in engagement around difficult contexts, and most especially for taking my place in the circle surrounding reconciliation.

Based on her years of experience in race and gender-based popular education and drawing on the work of Freire, Bishop (2015) contends that becoming an ally is a process of spiraling through five phases: placing ourselves; reflecting; analysing; choosing strategy; acting. Here Bishop enacts Freire's (1970/2000) contention that we learn more when we are open to learning from the complexities of problems as they arise, rather than assuming that we amass banks of learning that we draw upon regardless of the situation. The initial phase of placing ourselves involves understanding the historical and psycho-social foundations of oppression, how it is perpetuated, and how we can be simultaneously the oppressor and the oppressed. In the next phase we are challenged to reflect upon different types of

oppression and the impact of power and violence in its manifestation and preservation. Bishop reminds us that in reflecting on this, we must keep in mind that many forms of oppression may be simultaneously imposed upon an individual, identifying what Crenshaw (1989) referred to as intersectionality in her ground-breaking work on the compounded effects of gender and race for women of colour. The third phase, analysis, invites us to do the hard work of applying this learning to ourselves and do our own healing. These first three phases describe one way we can approach the consciousness-raising that Freire requires of us and gaining personal insight into our lifeworld, the public sphere and communicative action of Habermas. Bishop asks us to do this work before we decide which strategy to pursue to make change and the specific actions or tactics that might follow. She is clear however that this is not a sequential model, but rather involves learning, trying an idea or action and learning again, moving through the phases in overlapping multi-directional cycles. This guide gives us some direction on the concrete steps we can take as individual immigrant-descendants and immigrants to continually improve our critical consciousness as we stand in the circle surrounding reconciliation, aligned with the broader theories I have identified.

Early in my doctoral journey my supervisor Dr. Carmen Rodriguez de France shared a PowerPoint presentation that was given by Kaleb Child (Kwagiulth) to students in the Bachelor of Education program at the University of Victoria in November 2018. In this presentation, Child invited education students to consider where they sit on what he called the “continuum of understanding” in their “journey in Aboriginal Education” (Child, 2018). The continuum was presented as a four-point scale, with the first point labelled “awareness”, the second “knowledge”, the third “understanding” and the fourth “advocacy/action”. Where Bishop’s cycle focuses on the self-reflective process of becoming an ally, Child’s continuum emphasizes the degree to which immigrant-descendants and immigrants move through their awareness, understanding and knowledge of Indigenous Peoples. At a given point in

time, someone cycling through the process of becoming an ally might position themselves at a point along that continuum. As we take actions in the circle surrounding reconciliation we can move from awareness, to knowledge, to understanding to advocacy/action and back again to increasing awareness, increasing knowledge and increasing understanding, continually developing capacity for advocacy and action. This resonates with the work of Freire (1970/2000) and Bishop (2015), inviting us to consider where we are in a particular moment on the spiraling work of becoming an ally in a particular context. Where Child asked participants to think of where they see themselves in their "journey in Aboriginal education" generally, it is possible to apply this to specific problems we might encounter as Freire encouraged us or reflections on specific actions that Bishop encouraged.

Writing from her experience as an Algonquin Anishinaabe scholar who has spent decades advocating for the rights and reparation of Indigenous Peoples, Gehl (n.d.) offers a comprehensive "Ally Bill of Responsibilities" that provides 16 direct and instructive responsibilities for anyone contemplating reconciliation work. Responding to requests to share this document, Gehl grants this permission, but states on her website that, "I request that in doing so you post the title, and the first two points, and then post this link: http://www.lynngehl.com/my-ally-bill-of-responsibilities.html". Respecting her wishes, and thus providing examples of the statements she shares, the first two points that following the introductory phrase "Responsible allies:"

> 1. Do not act out of guilt, but rather out of a genuine interest in challenging the larger oppressive power structures;
>
> 2. Understand that they are secondary to the Indigenous people that they are working with and that they seek to serve. They and their needs must take a back seat;

The rest are equally powerful points for all aspiring allies to embrace, no matter where they are in the process of becoming allies, advocates and actors.

Why Talk Amongst Ourselves?

To situate my contention that work needs to be done by and for immigrant-descendants and immigrants before and during their time in the circle, and picking up on the work that Bishop charges us to do if we are to engage in ally work in a good way, I begin with discussion of Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological model of human development, introduce critical race theory and the embodied discourse of white fragility and refer to contexts that foster reflective learning. Appreciating all of these, and referring back to the metaphor of the Indian Residential School era and colonization as an act of family violence that the Truth and Reconciliation Commission drew, we clearly have work to do amongst ourselves before we burden Indigenous Peoples with the pain of coming to terms ourselves with what those who immigrated to these lands before us have done and how that legacy unfairly privileges us today. This is the primary concern of finding a space to explore with other immigrant-descendants and immigrants what our various mental cages look like and how we can avoid collateral damage to Indigenous Peoples around us as we break free.

As a child walking through the forest, Bronfenbrenner saw the interconnectedness of the flora and fauna to their environments (Hoare, 2008). Later, as an academic studying child development, he drew from Lewin, Piaget, and Vygotsky embracing their respective contributions related to the concepts of interaction, constructivism, and the zone of proximal development, respectively. Describing what became known as his person-environment theory, Lewin (1936) had stated, "Every psychological event depends upon the state of the person and at the same time on the environment, although their relative importance is different in different cases" (p. 12). Piaget (1936) had introduced the epistemological perspective of constructivism from the interpretivist ontological stance, in which individuals are believed

to create their own ways of knowing, constructing knowledge based on experience and reflection. Vygotsky (1978) had submitted that there is a space between what we know and what we do not yet know that he described as the zone of proximal development where learning can occur.

Pulling these concepts together, Bronfenbrenner (1979) combined aspects of the work of these thinkers in his ecological model of human development (Hoare, 2008), arguing that humans exist in a set of concentric circles of systems that interact to create the psycho-social ecosystems in which our lifeworlds are constructed. At the epicenter of these systems is the individual. The individual is surrounded by a microsystem of settings through which the individual interacts with people, such as family, friends, work colleagues, volunteer or interest group members and members of spiritual communities. Larger institutions form the exosystem, comprised of the economy, media, government, education and religion. Culture, derived from belief systems, values, traditions and customs, forms the macrosystem that encompasses the other two. Bronfenbrenner called the interactive experience that results from an individual engaging across systems the mesosystem. Finally, Bronfenbrenner proposed that the entire ecosystem of human development – the individual, microsystem, exosystem, macrosystem and mesosystem – occurs in the chronosystem of time and historical context.

Mapping this theory of individual human development onto the challenge of reconciliation, the reconciliation imperative can be located as a concern of the exosystem, given that the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Report has had such far-reaching implications for all institutions. In the context of the chronosystem, it seems there is a moment now when there is opportunity to expand the circle as the Report and its Calls to Action reverberate through governments, schools, health care institutions, religious institutions, social justice networks and more. As immigrant-descendants and immigrants coming to join the circle, the microsystem of personal settings that we inhabit provides a place for us to start breaking down our mental cages, acknowledging that this cannot be the place we

end this work. The point of exploring our microsystems as immigrant-descendants and immigrants first is to interrogate tough questions about our place as oppressors and to ask the awkward questions we may share in a safe space. This especially aligns with the analysis phase of the process that Bishop (2015) suggests for approaching ally work, where we are called to push our understanding and heal ourselves in a zone of proximal development (Vygotsky, 1978). It can be helpful as we contemplate practicing approaches to engagement that reduce the tensions inherent in complex challenges like reconciliation, such as those offered by Sennet (2102), Snowdon and Boone (2007), and Wheatley and Frieze (2011).

Recalling that systems infiltrate the lifeworlds of individuals in a received democratic society as Habermas (1994) observed, it is clear that it would be difficult for the individual to not be influenced by the systemic racist perspectives and behaviours that are embedded in Bronfenbrenner's macrosystem of culture and enacted by the institutions of the exosystem (1979). Considering the development of the individual in a microsystem of settings where interactions occur amongst the people most closely to us, critical race theory can offer important insights into our identities and how we understand and build relationships with others. Critical race theory is a practice as much as a theory (Crenshaw et al.,1995; Green & Sonn, 2006; McGonegal, 2009), inviting us to activate critical consciousness and see the ways in which racism insidiously permeates our entire ecosystem, including our inner lifeworlds.

Race and the Other

It is not easy for many of us to talk about race. Race evokes the paradigm of difference, the long and shameful history of inhumane treatment of those who were not of white European ancestry and the disparities that continue today. As Regan (2010) and others have noted, this creates dissonance for immigrant-descendants and immigrants, particularly for those of us who are white as we are far less likely to experience oppression based on race. DiAngelo (2011) notes this is most especially true for those of us who would describe ourselves as "progressive, color blinds" (p.40). She goes further to identify what she terms "white fragility" (DiAngelo, 2011, p.57), a constellation of responses that are

manifest when we experience the discomfort of facing the truths about race and privilege. According to DiAngelo, white fragility is,

> "…a state in which even a minimum amount of racial stress becomes intolerable, triggering a range of defensive moves. These moves include the outward display of emotions such as anger, fear, and guilt, and behaviors such as argumentation, silence, and leaving the stress-inducing situation. These behaviors, in turn, function to reinstate white racial equilibrium. (p. 57)

In the context of the circle surrounding reconciliation, the experience of our shame and guilt does not give us permission to burden Indigenous Peoples with it. It must not divert attention to the needs of the privileged yet again. Not all immigrant-descendants and immigrants are white of course, and in this context, and while it is true that people who identify as neither white nor Indigenous, focus in this context needs to be on the experience of Indigenous Peoples (Allpress et al., 2010; Barker, 2009; Battell et al., 2015). Researching the experiences of university students involved in ally work with the Winnemem Wintu Nation, Bacon (2017) delved into the emotions that emerged for these students as they learned about the oppression of the Winnemem Wintu people, its legacies and persistence. Speaking to the importance respecting the Winnemem Wintu people as this happens, he observes, "knowledge acquisition often elicits shame and guilt, feelings that students must manage in order to be effective allies while simultaneously navigating the pervasive concept that guilt has no place in solidarity work" (p.441). Telling her story as "the Other", a woman of colour, bell hooks (1990) describes,

> I am waiting for them to stop talking about the Other, to stop even describing how important it is to be able to speak about difference. . . . Often their speech about the Other is a mask, an oppressive talk hiding gaps, absences, that space where our words would be if we were speaking. Often this speech about the Other annihilates, erases: No need to hear your voice when we can talk about you better than you can speak about yourself. Only tell me about your

> pain. I want to know your story. And then I will tell it back to you in a new way. Tell it back to you in such a way that it has become mine, my own. Re-writing you, I write myself anew. I am still author, authority, I am still the coloniser, the speaking subject, and you are now at the centre of my talk, Stop. (pp. 151-152)

Acknowledging this experience of Others in the context of adult education from her perspective as a white woman, Shore (2001) adds:

> …adult education theorizing would be more productive if it paid some explicit attention to how Whiteness is theorized within. This work may in fact be done in collaboration with our colleagues and friends of color but seeking approval for our learning is problematic. Furthermore, we cannot rely on them to smooth the passage and absorb the discomfort emerging from this process. Historically, the Other has been doing this for centuries, and despite the best of intentions, I believe many of the practices of adult education are designed to ensure that this dependency relationship continues. (pp. 52-53)

Understanding this, it is clear to me that it is important for us to engage as immigrant-descendants and immigrants to help one another reflect on who we are and how we can come to the circle without our mental cages, or at least with locks loosened and cracks in the bars, better prepared to focus our energies on the work of reconciliation, rather the work of ourselves. In the context of adult education broadly, and post-secondary education in Canada in particular, this is essential.

Reflection for Change

While there is indeed a danger of reinforcing our mental cages by talking amongst ourselves, the orientation to critical theory generally and critical race theory specifically can help us to avoid this pitfall. Critical theory is an approach to understanding society that challenges grand narratives that perpetuate power and privilege (Habermas, 1991; Mautner, 2015; Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2017); critical race theory

adds emphasis on the influence of race (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2017). The key objective of engaging in a dialogic exercise with immigrant-descendants and immigrants must therefore hold this touchstone, while at the same time, creating opportunities for individual and shared reflection. Indigenous epistemologies have privileged learning through overlapping experiences of observation, action and reflection for millennia (Battiste, 2002; Frideres, 2009; Little Bear, 2011). The role of reflection, or reflexivity, as integral to development and change, as prompted by the work of Freire, Habermas and many other thought leaders of the 21st century, is relatively new in the macrosystem of contemporary dominant culture. Danielewicz (2001) describes this necessary reflexivity as:

> …an act of self-conscious consideration that can lead people to a deepened understanding of themselves and others, not in the abstract, but in relation to specific social environments . . . . It involves a person's active analysis of past situations, events, and products, with the inherent goals of critique and revision for the explicit purpose of achieving an understanding that can lead to change in thought or behavior. (pp. 155-156)

While this reflection occurs within the individual, it is informed by the macrosystem. Discourse with the people in our personal settings helps us to see ourselves and our lifeworld through the exchange of ideas and the cognitive and affective responses they elicit. The circumstances of our interactions cause us to think about what someone has said or done. The impact of the mesosystem as it hosts the exchange between settings of the microsystem and exosystem is experienced and observed by the individual. The macrosystem of culture is opened to scrutiny as ontologies and epistemologies are recognized and compared. Through critical reflection, we are challenged not only to consider ourselves in our current context based on the microsystem, exosystem, macrosystem, mesosystem and chronosystem, but to contemplate how we have made meaning of all of this. This hermeneutic exercise invites us to change what we think and how we act as a result. Sheared and Sissel (2001) summarize the

necessity of this process in adult education stating, “the only way we can begin to make space for ‘Others’ as well as those of us in the academy, is to engage in critical, reflective, dialogue” (p. 327). As Shore (2001) suggests, however, perhaps we need to invest in ethical spaces for critical, reflective dialogue that is the work of immigrant-descendants and immigrants to prepare to take our place in the circle surrounding reconciliation, and to continue to reflect upon our experiences to truly learn and develop as we move in and out of the circle over time.

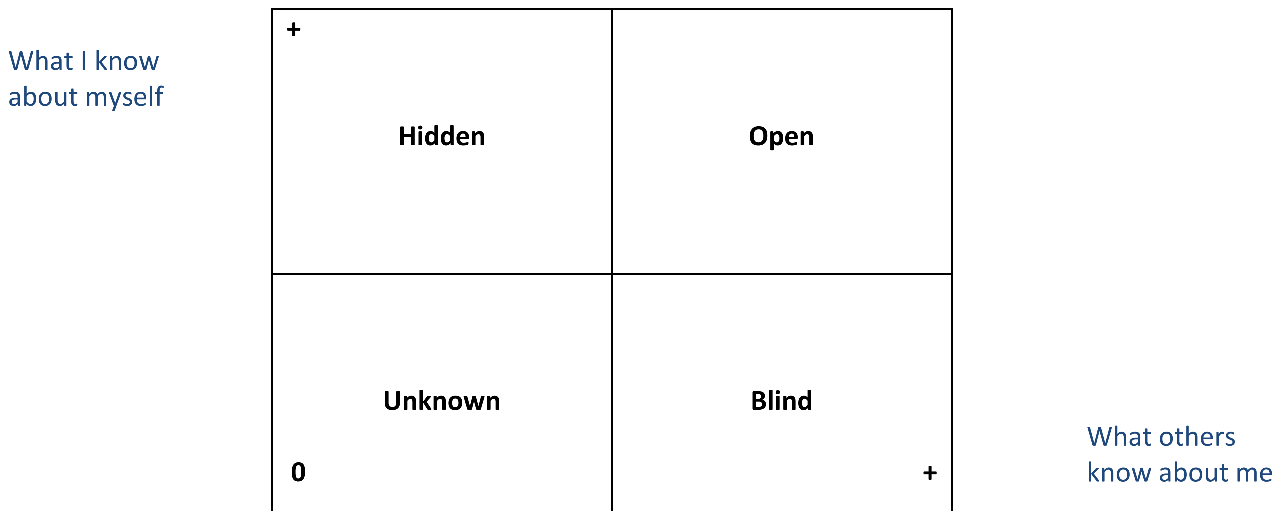
We are not without guidance in this, however. Referring to my earlier definition of social justice as the outcome of Dewey’s notion of a “a freer and more humane experience in which all share and to which all contribute” (1939, p.229), Sensoy and DiAngelo (2017) add application of critical theory to the cognitive-instrumental rationality of social justice work. They offer five guidelines for students engaging in critical social justice learning that directly speak to the individual in their lifeworld and ecosystem of human development: “Strive for intellectual humility (p. 6); “Everyone has an informed opinion. Opinions are not the same as informed knowledge.” (p.9); “Let go of anecdotal evidence and instead examine patterns” (p.11); “Use your reactions as entry points for gaining deeper self-knowledge.” (p.13); “Recognize how your social position informs your reactions to your instructor and the course content.” (p.15). These guidelines can be transferred to may settings and give us touch-points to consider as we stand in the circle surrounding reconciliation.

In some of our early discussions about my research, my supervisor Dr. Carmen Rodriguez de France raised the Johari Window as one tool to consider in the development of deeper self-knowledge and reflecting on our actions as we undertake to be allies. Named for creators Joseph Ingram and Harry Luft (1955), the purpose of the Johari Window is to consider how our self-knowledge intersects with the knowledge that others have of us in the context of interpersonal communication. In Figure 1, the two

conditions that form the axes are “what I know about myself” and “what others know about me”. The bottom left intersection of both axes represents *nothing* and ends of each axis represents *everything.*

Figure 1

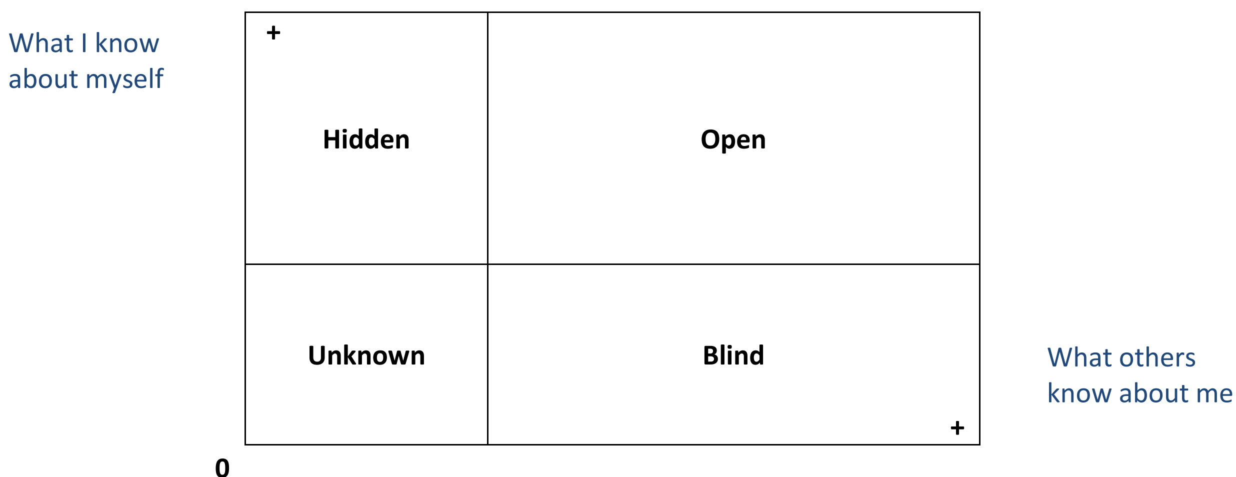
The Johari Window



The resulting quadrants have taken on different labels over the years, but originators Luft and Ingram (1955) titled them unknown, hidden, blind and open. The unknown quadrant represents what is unknown to the individual and unknown to others. The hidden quadrant refers to what the individual knows about themselves but keeps from others. The blind quadrant contains what is unknown to the individual but known to others. The open quadrant is the space where the individual and others know about the individual. It is important to note that the axes are intended to be continua, and as such, when applying the Johari Window to an individual in a communication setting, the bisecting lines vary their position. According to Luft and Ingram (1955), better communication results in situations where the open pane is maximized, looking more like the diagram in Figure 2.

Figure 2

Johari Window Highlighting Open Pane



As I contemplated exploring how immigrant-descendant and immigrant faculty members conceive of themselves as they approach reconciliation work, it seemed that this tool might be helpful in my interactions with participants, and for my own self-reflection. The exercise of self-reflection, whatever form it takes, supported by dialogue with those in our microsystem of personal settings and by dialogues with others from diverse other settings, can help us to crack our mental cages. As we open our hearts and minds to other ways of seeing our lifeworld, we can begin to engage in creating a new vision for our shared future as Dewey, Freire and Habermas extolled.

Summary

As I reflected upon the wide range of literature that I explored in preparation for this research, it became evident to me that reconciliation is not just a project to say sorry and pay back Indigenous Peoples for the sins of the past. It is something much greater. It is about changing our world for all of us, though not necessarily in ways that are not new to dominant discourses. While each of the theorists highlighted in this chapter speak to changing our world in the broadest sense, I contend that these same principles have value for consideration at all circles of human engagement, including our daily interactions in our families, workplaces and local communities.

Chapter Three: Contemplating Research as Action

In the previous chapter I established a firmer grounding of the rationale for this research and the philosophical and psycho-social context in which it occurred, walking through what Potts and Brown (2015) refer to as the process of mess-finding that should precede clarifying purpose or defining a research question. This provided opportunity for me to work towards *live a congruent lifestyle* and *prepare the space, s*tages of research as ceremony that Wilson (S. Wilson, personal communication, February 2, 2020) suggests in practicing in the Indigenist research paradigm. This chapter outlines the process by which I chose the strategies of inquiry to conduct this research, settling on a narrative approach for exploring the experience of immigrant-descendant and immigrant faculty members in approaching work in service of the Calls to Action, consistent with the anti-oppressive research approach (Potts & Brown, 2015) and the Indigenist research paradigm (Wilson, 2008). This chapter therefore continues to *prepare the space* and adds details of how I ultimately chose to assemble the research and *engage in ritual.*

I begin by situating the emergence of narrative inquiry as a qualitative methodology and then summarize Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) description as representative of this methodology in the dominant culture. I choose to do this first, not to privilege the dominant approach, but rather to provide a foil against which other strategies of inquiry might be compared. With the intention of furthering the decolonization of my thinking and amplifying the voice of Indigenous scholars, I then turn to the work of Indigenous scholars Margaret Kovach (Plains Cree/Saulteaux) and Suzanne Stewart (Yellowknife Dene), who have used narrative approaches in ways that both resemble and differ from the model that Clandinin and Connelly (2000) propose. I next review the application of narrative approaches to Indigenist research by an immigrant-descendant researcher (Barton, 2004) and by a research team of three immigrant-descendant Australians and an Indigenous Australian (Wright, Lloyd, Suchet-Pearson,

Burarrwanga, L., Tofa, M. & Bawaka Country, 2012). I included these because they were the only articles I had found at the time of writing in which immigrant-descendant researchers reflect on their identities and praxis in the context of working in Indigenous contexts with narrative methodologies. I follow with a summary of what was possibly the more profoundly insightful resource I encountered in preparing this proposal: the chapter on "Becoming an anti-oppressive researcher" by Potts and Brown (2015) from the book *Research as resistance: Revisiting critical, Indigenous and anti-oppressive approaches* (Strega & Brown, 2015). In exploring an anti-oppressive approach, I delve into the meaning of critical reflexivity in the context of this research and the role that autoethnographic observations have to play in illuminating the process and its outcomes. The chapter concludes with an overview of the research activities that I ultimately undertook, describing the ways in which I proceeded through the *engage in ritual stage* of research as ceremony in the Indigenist research paradigm.

Narrative Inquiry in the Dominant Culture

Narrative inquiry emerged during the rise of qualitative research methodologies that followed the shift in the social sciences from positivism to relativism in the last decades of the 20th century (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Guba & Lincoln, 2005; Schensul, 2012). As dissatisfaction with the rigidity of positivist ontology and the limitations of its associated epistemologies and methodologies grew, scholars seeking to understand human experience turned to more holistic ways of imagining and understanding ways of knowing and being in the world (Guba & Lincoln, 2005; Lyotard, 1984; Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). Advocating a relativist ontological stance, these scholars adopted interpretivist epistemological perspectives and consequently sought methodologies that allowed for interpretation of experience, contending that there is no one correct way of seeing things.

At the same time, critique of the modernist universalist suppositions that there are objective truths, and that the goal of human existence is ever more that of progress towards the attainment of

predefined states of being best achieved through the empiricism of scientific method, led to the emergence of post-modernist relativism that challenged these “grand narratives” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. xxv). The Frankfurt School of philosophers of the mid-20th century provoked this shift, initiating what has become known as critical theory (Mautner, 2005). More of an orientation than a theory, critical theory has as its objective the transformation of society as a whole in relativist terms (Habermas, 1971). This stood in contrast to the prevailing objective of theory and research at that time: to understand and explain (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). Towards the latter half of the century, feminist scholars in particular contributed to the development of critical theory, challenging the notion that individual theorists and researchers create knowledge that they then can give to others (Anderson, 2019). Instead, these scholars assert that knowledge is socially constructed and thus is the result of shared human interaction and interpretation. This thinking led to the rise of the social constructivist epistemological position that objective reality is constructed by individuals through social interaction (Mautner, 2005). As a result, methodologies that broke free from the rigidity of scientific method were pursued. Instead of requiring a null hypothesis to be tested through controlled experimentation to determine generalizable results for application to the world at large, qualitative methodologies, such as case study, ethnography, grounded theory, phenomenology, and narrative inquiry, developed through this period. Although these offer unique features, they all share a relativist ontological stance, being interpretivist or often critical epistemologies rooted in interpretation – methodologies still regarded as being “at the margins” (Kovach, 2005, p.9).

Understanding Narrative Inquiry as a Methodology: Clandinin and Connelly

Written at the turn of the 21st century, Clandinin and Connelly’s *Narrative inquiry: Experience and story in qualitative research* published in 2000 provides an extensive and much-referenced description of narrative inquiry. Using narratives as a source of study had been emerging in scholarly

literature for some years but the practice of narrative inquiry as a methodology was coalescing around this time (Frank, 2015; Franzosi, 1998; Josselson & Lieblich, 1999; Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007; Reissman, 1993). Clandinin and Connelly (2000) had previously written on narrative inquiry (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; Clandinin & Connelly, 1994), and brought this forward by summarizing in their seminal work their practice as it had evolved over the previous decade. I refer exclusively to this publication in my references to Clandinin and Connelly's work below, except where noted.

Unabashedly committed to Dewey's assertion that experience is central to knowledge and learning, while citing the influences of the scholars referenced above, Clandinin and Connelly encapsulate narrative inquiry as an approach to understanding experience in context. Focusing on Dewey's emphasis, Clandinin and Connelly contend that the best way to understand experience is through exploring stories about ourselves, others, and the world around us. These stories are the foundation of narrative inquiry. However, they are not simply stories that a subject tells about their individual experience.

The Narrative Inquiry Space

Clandinin and Connelly interject Dewey's principles of continuity and interaction into their conceptualization of narrative inquiry and in so doing open up more sources for researchers to draw upon than a single story about a moment in time. Rather than defining narrative inquiry, they illustrate how this methodology is employed in research, but before they share specific strategies of inquiry that narrative inquirers might use, Clandinin and Connelly set out a model that they call the "three-dimensional narrative inquiry space" (p. 49). To explain how they determined this model, they identify four tensions that emerge from interaction and continuity respectively, three of which are the same for both: certainty, people and action. Interaction's fourth tension is context while continuity's fourth tension is temporality. Clandinin and Connelly observe that narrative inquiry relies on interpretation and

as such cannot offer certainty. People are understood to be in a constant process of change and therefore it is necessary to appreciate the impact of the past and present on their development for the future as narratives are developed. In narrative inquiry it is important to understand action, where a single action might result in several potential narratives that may differ depending upon the interpretations of those involved in the research. Context includes temporal, spatial and interpersonal settings in which experience occurs. Temporality, or the notion that experience exists in the continuum of time, is described as "the understanding that any thing, or event, has a past, a present as it appears to us, and an implied future" (p. 29). Temporality is implicated in understanding people, action and context.

The three-dimensional narrative inquiry space is formed by the combination of three axes of time (context/temporality), personal/social (people/interaction/temporality) and place (context/temporality). Experience is therefore understood by situating it in terms of the continuum of time, the perspective of the individual and the social relationships they have and where the experience occurs. In addition, Clandinin and Connelly (1994, referenced in Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) add that this space has four simultaneous directions that must be considered: inward, outward, forward and backward. Inward refers to the individual's thoughts and feelings, while outward refers to the external environment. Backward and forward reflect once again the impact of temporality, as the whole space can be considered in the past, present or future. Returning to the question of what narrative inquirers do, experience is elucidated by interrogating the three dimensions of time, personal/social and place. Clandinin and Connelly add that "…to experience an experience – that is to do research on an experience – is to experience it simultaneously in these four ways and to ask questions pointing each way" (p.50). Rather than a three-dimensional space, this description instead suggests to me four-

dimensional model, a spinning tetrahedron for which any one of the sides may lengthen or shorten as it moves in all directions through time and space.

This conceptual framework offers a great deal of insight into exploring the stories that people tell about themselves and their experiences as they consider their identity and perspectives about participating in ally work that is required for reconciliation. I appreciate that it attempts to capture experience in a way that attends to many simultaneous dimensions that relate to any experience and seems to address a good deal of the potential influences at play in identity and self-location. It makes sense that the interplay of the individual in the social context, the time at which an individual is approaching ally work historically and in their lives and the influences of the place where they are all combine to situate a person's sense of self and the future relationships and goals that might be desired. The framework does lack reference to the larger macrosystem that Bronfenbrenner (1979) described and thus does not explicitly account for the political context, but I can see that this might be reflected in all three dimensions in some way. It does make sense however this might indeed be a good way to consider what goes on inside an individual as they interact in Bronfenbrenner's ecosystem of human development (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

In addition to changes in shape and movement of the framework in which the experience occurs, the strategies of inquiry a narrative inquirer might undertake are dynamic as well. Clandinin and Connelly describe data, the information that the researcher takes in through the experience, as field texts, choosing this term "…because they are created, neither found nor discovered, by participants and researchers in order to represent various aspects of field experience" (p. 92). While interviews can be an important source for field texts, field texts can include "…autobiographical writing; journal writing; field notes; letters; conversation; research interviews; family stories; documents; photographs, memory boxes and other personal-family-social artifacts; and life experience…." (p.93) and more. Clandinin and

Connelly encourage openness to considering an even wider range of sources that may help illuminate the experience.

Through immersion in field texts that tell stories about an experience, Clandinin and Connelly assert that the researcher becomes a part of the research not as a participant-observer but as a participant. Like Boje (1998), they see that stories are best interpreted in the complexities of context, not just as objects of study by the researcher as other. They refer to this as being “always in the midst, located somewhere along the dimensions of time, place, the personal and the social…in the middle of a nested set of stories – ours and theirs” (p. 63). This requires the researcher to work through issues related to personal connections, intentions, points of transition and the utility they contribute as they engage in the experience that is the research. They are adamant that the researcher is a part of the research, and that participants be considered co-researchers, creating stories together. Narrative inquirers don’t merely watch the travelers passing by, they join the journey.

To capture the fullness of the experience and their reflections on it, Clandinin and Connelly indicate that the researcher should keep a journal that becomes a source along with all of the other narratives that the researcher reviews to create what they call “the research text”, the overall narrative that results. This journal is not intended to be interpreted while still gathering field texts, but rather is a place to record observations and personal reflections concentrated along the lines of time, personal/ social and place. Considering this practice of waiting until the end of the journey to contemplate and make meaning of what is happening as a researcher seemed somewhat artificial to me, particularly in the context of being with people as we explore such a personal and potentially emotionally charged topic as identity and Indigenous ally work.

Openness to Change

Having gathered field texts, the next task is to create some form of text that transitions these field texts to a summative narrative of the experience that was the subject of the inquiry. This is one of the most difficult points to navigate in narrative inquiry, according to Clandinin and Connelly. They resist presenting the process of creating something to share with others as an outcome of the research as a series of steps, advocating that each narrative inquirer must address how to do this best in context of the three-dimensional narrative inquiry space, contemplating time, personal/social and place through the refractions of temporality. Instead they identify topics that researchers must consider as they come to the end of the process, including "…justification, phenomena, method, analysis-interpretation, the place of theoretical literature positioning and the kind of text intended and composed…." (p.119). This openness to the data leading to the outcome appealed to my emancipatory pragmatist nature, but its reliance on a narrative to be told as a result was limiting.

Clandinin and Connelly advocate that openness to changing the phenomenon is key to contemplating a resulting research text. In contrast to methodologies that require a static research question they argue that, "…narrative inquiry carries more of a sense of a search, a "re-search"….more of a sense of continual reformation of an inquiry than it does a sense of problem definition and solution" (p. 124). As a result, they suggest that the phenomenon that was the focus of a research proposal may not be the phenomenon that ultimately shines through in the field texts, and thus the research text may answer a different question than the one originally posed. This is understood as a natural outcome of the experiential pragmatism that Dewey advocated and an appreciation for, if not a commitment to, the epistemological position of social constructivism. Considering my learning journey of this research recounted earlier, there had indeed been one point at which I realized that the phenomenon I thought I wanted to study was not the right one at all.

As regards the tasks that Clandinin and Connelly suggest narrative inquiry requires, they encourage questioning theory, the practicality of field texts, analysis and interpretation. With respect to theory, they acknowledge the attractiveness of considering narrative inquiry in the context of the other qualitative methodologies, confessing that they had originally taken this approach in their own work. They assert however that while this may be helpful to understanding these methodologies, this does not help to describe the strategies of inquiry of narrative inquiry. They argue that “It is more productive to begin with explorations of the phenomena of experience rather than in comparative analysis of various methodological frames” (p. 128). They invite the inclusion of strategies of inquiry from all methodological theories and practices as they are germane to the inquiry at hand, using the metaphor of making a soup. The resulting dish will have a flavor all of its own and will be different, even though many of the same ingredients are included, depending upon the chef who creates it. This approach appealed to my pragmatic nature and resistance to align with narrow definitions of concepts in a complex reality.

Recalling their reference to negotiating transitions through the process of narrative inquiry, Clandinin and Connelly encourage narrative inquirers to return to these as they move from field texts to developing research texts. They caution against the appeal of simply quoting field texts as well, contending that the process of deconstructing and reconstructing these through analysis and interpretation is necessary. They describe that, “A narrative inquirer spends many hours reading and rereading field texts in order to construct a chronicled or summarized account of what is contained….” (p. 131). The practical issues of shifting one’s place in the journey emerge here as they identify how the immersion with others in an experience can make it difficult to withdraw from it in order to reflect to uncover meaning in the field texts and, in most cases, to eventually leave the journey altogether.

The Challenge of Shared Experience

The examples that Clandinin and Connelly provide of narrative inquiry are very much based in a shared experience of working together over an extended period of time. Although the participants and I have shared experiences by virtue of our work at the same post-secondary institution, hosting conversations where individuals reflected on their experiences was more conducive to eliciting the type of self-reflection and observation necessary to explore self-reflections in the context of ally work with Indigenous Peoples – and more achievable in a reasonable timeframe. This presented a quandary for me in applying this methodology to my research.

As the researcher reviews field texts to uncover meaning, Clandinin and Connelly urge that researchers raise questions for themselves about how the process of analysis and interpretation might unfold. While they are equally as open to possible approaches, they do advocate the use of archival strategies and coding. The authors suggest that the outcome of narrative inquiry is itself a narrative, borrowing from fictional literature with its "narrative analytic terms" (p. 131) as a framework for researchers to analyse their field texts and construct the resulting overarching narrative. They state that:

> …the initial analysis deals with matters such as character, place, scene, plot, tension, end point, narrator, context, and tone…. With narrative analytic terms in mind, narrative inquirers begin to narratively code their field texts. For example, names of the characters that appear in field texts, places where actions and events occurred, story lines that interweave and interconnect, gaps or silences that become apparent, tensions that emerge, and continuities and discontinuities that appear are all possible codes. (p. 131)

This approach provides structure to assist the researcher in achieving what Clandinin and Connelly refer to as "narrative unity" (p. 3).

I did read and re-read (and re-read) the transcripts of conversations with participants as Clandinin and Connelly suggest is necessary, but I found that the conversations did not lend themselves to such a formalized approach to framing the results, nor was it possible to generate narrative unity – sometimes even in one conversation. Here again I hold that the process that Clandinin and Connelly conceive of for narrative inquiry was less of a fit for this research, and as such, was not the best way to frame the results that were generated.

Clandinin & Connelly note that "One of the most poignant moments in narrative inquiry is always the moment when the research texts are shared with the participants" (p. 135). Reminding the researcher that this member checking is a necessary duty in the exercise of narrative inquiry is important because it situates the research text as something that is not the purview of the researcher alone, but is intended to be shared, just as the experience under examination was shared. The authors raise the question of ownership of field texts and their interpretations, but they are not clear in where they stand on this. As I thought about working with people whom I will be asking to share insights into their hearts and minds as we explore the very personal nature of their experiences, I could not imagine that they would not own the substance of their contributions, even to the point of withdrawing them at any point in the course of the research.

Clandinin and Connelly encourage the exploration of narrative inquiry at what they call the "boundaries" (p. 21) of other methodologies. Reflecting on Clandinin and Connelly's characterization of narrative inquiry, Pinnegar and Daynes (2007) identify four themes that represented "turns" from previous conceptualizations of research that position narrative inquiry at the boundaries. These include: "relationship of researcher and researched" (p.9); "from numbers to words as data" (p.15); "from the general to the particular" (p. 21); "blurring knowing" (p. 25). The first two are clearly conditions that Clandinin and Connelly stress are necessary for narrative inquiry, the inclusion of the researcher as a

participant in the journey and the reliance on qualitative data derived through field texts, rather than quantitative data derived through experimentation. As regards the latter two turns that narrative inquiry presents, Clandinin and Connelly observe that these characteristics of narrative inquiry particularly tempt researchers to ascribe to either formalistic thinking that seeks overarching categories or reductionist thinking that seeks themes that smooth over the uniqueness of experiences. They caution against these tendencies and urge researchers to emphasize the relational and uncertain nature of experience, noting that “Things that are seen clearly from a distance and prior to fieldwork as understandable or researchable or interpretable in theoretical terms lose their precision when the daily life of field experience is encountered” (p. 145). Rather, they argue, it is fidelity to relationship with participants and the life-in-progress perspective that must be privileged over theory and thus appreciating that the process and outcomes of narrative inquiry are not easily categorized is essential. These points fit well with my work.

Moving back and forth as I developed my understanding of narrative inquiry in the dominant culture, I explored the application of forms of narrative inquiry in a range of contexts. Among these were articles that describe understanding self in lived experience (Freeman, 2007; Gill, 2001; Shields, 2005; Witz, 2006), contexts of teaching (Feuerverger, 2011; Kitchen, 2011; Lindsay, 2006; Mansur, Tuval, Barak, Turniansky, Gidron & Weinberger, 2011; Richards, 2017; Tsui, 2007; Wood, 2000), social justice through education (Hodgson, 2009; Martin, 2013; Smith-Chandler & Swart, 2014; Vandeyar, 2008; Wolgemuth & Donohue, 2006;) and decolonizing research and pedagogy (Gill & White, 2013; Kinloch & Pedro, 2014). Going back to the literature I reviewed on ally work, I found research articles that described narrative approaches, though none specifically identified narrative inquiry as the methodology (Casey, 2010; Collins & Chlup, 2014; Patton & Bondi, 2015; Reynolds, 2013; Russell, 2011).

While none of the references I have sourced was a strict application of the Clandinin and Connelly perspective on narrative inquiry, and none was specifically related to my research question, they all offer insight into understanding self and the development of a praxis of ally work. In general, I have found that while many scholars refer to their work as narrative inquiry, frequently citing Clandinin and Connelly, they do not conform strictly to the description that these authors share, which is perhaps testament to the openness to revision that they promoted. I was pleasantly surprised to find articles in a wide range of journals and that even *Narrative Inquiry*, the scholarly journal devoted exclusively to writing about this methodology, includes works with nuanced approaches to theory and practice. Moreover, Clandinin (2007) has since edited a *Handbook of narrative inquiry: Mapping a methodology* that includes a variety of approaches to narrative inquiry, creating more of a map than a recipe as the subtitle suggests. As an example, the book includes a chapter that advocates approaches to visual narrative inquiry, where photographs and other visual images form the basis of field texts and the resulting research text (Bach, 2007). This led me to conclude that there are opportunities to experiment with the specific framework for narrative inquiry that Clandinin and Connelly (2000) propose and opportunity to adapt it as there are many core concepts that seem to fit with the context of my proposed research. Given such various ways that narrative inquiry may be exercised, I next visited the work of Indigenous scholars to see how narrative approaches could elucidate my research.

Indigenous Researchers and Narrative Approaches

To continue work on decolonizing my thinking and to emphasize voices of Indigenous scholars in this study, I next explored the ways in which Indigenous researchers have employed narrative approaches in their work. I undertook this with the intent of opening up other ways of seeing the possibilities of narrative approaches outside of dominant culture, not to appropriate Indigenous perspectives. I found no examples of published academic literature authored by a self-identified

Indigenous researcher who explicitly used narrative inquiry as Clandinin and Connelly (2000) represent this methodology in its entirety. As I read the work of scholars Margaret Kovach (Plains Cree/Salteaux) and Suzanne Stewart (Yellowknife Dene), I began to realize why this should not be surprising. Linking this to my previous reading of Indigenous scholarship, the disconnect between the paradigmatic positioning and rigidity of methodology, even one as fluid as narrative inquiry may be, is an important point to consider. As I describe the work of Kovach and Stewart in the following, I note where there are similarities and differences between their approaches and narrative inquiry.

Seeking out the work of Kovach, I found a number of publications she had authored (Kovach, 2005, 2009, 2013a, 2014) and co-authored (Battiste, Kovach & Balzer, 2010; Fast & Kovach, 2019; Kovach, Carriere, Barrett, Montgomery & Gilles, 2013b; Ritenburg, Leon, Linds, Nadeau, Goulet, Kovach &Marshall, 2014), along with her unpublished doctoral dissertation (Kovach, 2010). In the vast majority of her work she asserts the necessity of evolving Indigenous research in the academy and beyond and speaks to the historical, cultural and emancipatory rationale for this. She references characteristics of Indigenous research across this body of scholarship, but it is in her dissertation (2010) and the book that she wrote based on that work, *Indigenous methodologies: Characteristics, conversations and contexts*, (2009) that her ideas about the nature of Indigenous research generally and methodologies are most fully developed. Kovach muses that the time at which she undertook her doctoral research most likely had an impact on her perception of what she might be able to contribute and consequently the emphasis of her continuing work, referencing the impact of temporality on her experience that Clandinin and Connelly (2000) assert is fundamental to understanding experience in context. While I appreciate that there is much in her other scholarship that adds richness to understanding how she conceives of Indigenous research and methodologies, I focus on her book *Indigenous methodologies* as

it is clearly drawn from her past work and reflected in that which followed. All references to Kovach in the following are from *Indigenous methodologies* (2009), except where otherwise noted.

Describing the book as the integration of her "own narrative" (p. 14) with academic literature and the addition of transcriptions of conversations with six Indigenous scholars, Kovach shares that she wrote with intention for Indigenous and non-Indigenous readers. Kovach refers to herself as a facilitator rather than a knowledge-keeper stating, "I have a responsibility to help create entry points for Indigenous knowledges to come through" (p. 7), and adding that she saw that her work on Indigenous research "…would be useful to both Indigenous and non-Indigenous researchers seeking to honour Indigenous knowledge systems" (p. 11). Asserting that Indigenous research approaches unsettle dominant research paradigms, Kovach argues that the only way to continue to resolve this is to continue to represent them in the academy. Thus, she declares that, "The most effective allies are those who are able to respect Indigenous research frameworks on their own terms. This involves a responsibility to know what that means" (pp. 13-14).

"Knowing what that means" is the prime object of the book, as Kovach unpacks the complexities of understanding Indigenous ontology, epistemology and methodologies in learned, but accessible, ways. She begins with underscoring the importance of situating self, mapping out the context for her offerings, and describing not specific strategies of inquiry of research that are inherently Indigenous, but the characteristics of inquiry that are aligned with the Indigenous research framework she proposes. Kovach explores a wide range of issues that are critical to the conduct of research with and about Indigenous Peoples and communities, and consistently advocates the importance of supporting Indigenous graduate students and advancing understanding and acceptance of Indigenous research in the academy.

The Holistic Approach

Kovach also addresses the balance between pan-Indigenous thinking that assumes homogeneity amongst Indigenous Peoples and the specificity of what she calls "tribal-based" (p. 10) approaches, asserting that "…we understand each other because we share a worldview that holds common, enduring beliefs about the world….Thus when considering Indigenous epistemologies, Indigenous people contextualize to their tribal affiliation. We do this because our knowledges are bound to place" (p. 37). At the risk of over-simplifying the depth of knowledge and wisdom that accompanies her articulation of this, there are several shared enduring principles that Kovach references throughout the book. Central to these is the primacy of relationality between and among individuals, communities and all living things, and therefore is a fundamental commitment to a holistic perspective. The understanding that the culture of one's people and place is inextricably linked to being, regardless of whether one is raised in this culture or not, is also key. The understanding that knowledge is embedded in language that cannot be fully transmitted through the written word must be appreciated. The importance of relationship and culture begets accountability to community, with heavy emphasis on reciprocity and the betterment of people as a whole. Without romanticizing this, Kovach also observes that in contrast to the dominant culture, Indigenous Peoples have always considered the sacredness of life and the respectful balance of living in a good way together as one extended family.

Articulating this is important in appreciating the temporal, personal/social and contextual dimensions that Clandinin and Connelly (2000) describe in their three-dimensional narrative inquiry space, but it is clear that for Indigenous Peoples these are more deeply embedded. For example, where the dominant expression of narrative inquiry conceives of a beginning and an end, time stretches far into the ancestral past of Indigenous Peoples and into the future generations to come. Relationships are not only between individuals, but experienced as a collective, a community. Ultimately, narratives are not individual narratives, but community narratives. This offers an important consideration for my work

with immigrant-descendants and immigrants as we explore core concepts of identity and praxis together in the context of a university community.

Noting that Indigenous researchers have used phenomenology and narrative inquiry as "useful methodologies for Indigenous researchers who wish to make meaning from story" (p. 27), Kovach reveals that she had initially thought she would use phenomenology for her doctoral research. She explains that she chose not to do so because she wanted to use a methodology that had more room for addressing decolonization, the emancipatory aim at the core of her work. Turning next to critical theory, she engaged in thought experiments about how this methodology would propel her work, ultimately concluding that, "…no matter how sympathetic the Western methodology, the question I was considering ruled out a research process based solely on Western thought and tradition" (p. 39).

A Framework of Circles

In response, Kovach offers a conceptual Indigenous research framework that includes six elements, situated as circles within a larger circle surrounding the epistemology of her Plains Cree/Salteaux ancestry. The elements include researcher preparation, research preparation, decolonizing and ethics, gathering knowledge, making meaning and giving back. There is no directionality in this framework, though as in Clandinin and Connelly's description of narrative inquiry (2000), she identifies that there is an "…in and out, back and forth, up and down pathway" (p. 45). In the description that follows, it seems that there are but a few differences, but where these exist, they are critical.

Researcher preparation includes the sensitivities of negotiating entry into the research that Clandinin and Connelly (2005) identify, including both situation of self within oneself as a researcher and

within the community[3] where the research takes place. Narrative inquiry seemingly places less emphasis on the explicit identification of the self in the community, and while journaling is encouraged, journals are seen as field texts that do not include the ongoing interpretation and sharing that Kovach suggests is important.

Like narrative inquiry, Kovach's Indigenous research framework includes research preparation that involves setting out the intention for the research, identifying participants, deciding how information will be gathered, considering how these data will be analysed and adopting an orientation to staying true to the process, and trust. Both approaches allow for a great deal of flexibility in identifying the research intention through a working version of a research question, though narrative inquiry seemingly requires a more solidified question, accepting that it may be revised in retrospect, where in Kovach's framework the intention to explore something of merit may be enough. Both approaches ask the researcher to consider the value that the research can offer, but it is clearly in Kovach's framework that the value must be real for community.

Where Kovach's work diverges from narrative inquiry most is in the preparation for, and eventual gathering of knowledge. Narrative inquiry offers a wide range of options to the researcher for collecting information about experience, oral, written, visual and experiential, while Kovach's conceptualization of Indigenous research is founded on oral storytelling, imbued with the reflections of the researcher. The strategies of inquiry by which stories are heard may differ, according to Kovach, citing research by Indigenous scholars who have used conversations one-on-one and in groups of varying sizes. Where these formats are used in narrative inquiry, they share the unstructured nature

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[3] I have used the word community to reflect the interactivity of the research participants, understanding that in narrative inquiry the community may be as small as one researcher and one participant.

that Kovach insists is necessary for Indigenous research and in all cases, the researcher is embedded in the research. Researchers using narrative inquiry are expected to produce field texts that do not include the researcher's analysis or interpretation, leaving that to the final stages of creating research texts, while reflexivity is inherent in the ongoing research process in Kovach's framework. Kovach observes that the English language is based on a "dualist binary ontology" (Waters, 2004, p.97, cited in Kovach, 2005) while Indigenous languages follow a "nonbinary complementary dualist construct" (Waters, 2004, p. 98, cited in Kovach, 2005) leading to difficulty in interpreting meaning from translations. Even when Indigenous languages are not spoken, Kovach asserts that Indigenous communication is highly nuanced and as a result, writing what was said or otherwise communicated reduces the fullness of its meaning. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) concede that the latter is true in narrative inquiry as well, but it is clear that Kovach understands this in a way that I do not think I can fully appreciate, nor for which narrative inquiry sufficiently accounts. Where Clandinin and Connelly (2000) raise questions of ownership of the knowledge that is gathered, Kovach is unequivocal that it belongs to the individual who has the right to share it. In cases of knowledge-keepers who share knowledge that is held in a family line or community, that knowledge is owned by the collective and must be respected as such.

As with narrative inquiry, Kovach suggests that meaning can be derived from the knowledge that is gathered by identifying words, concepts and conditions that appear, using some form of coding. Both Clandinin and Connelly (2000) and Kovach caution researchers about the dangers of reductionism, but it is clear that the production of a research text that tells a story about an experience using the literary tools of plot and character to create a unified chronicle is the outcome of narrative inquiry. Kovach's Indigenous research framework is less prescriptive in the ultimate outcome, contending only that the outcome should be relevant to the community for which it is intended.

Throughout the Indigenous research framework that she proposes, Kovach asserts that it is tribal knowledge, the shared understanding of the cosmos that an Indigenous people share having lived in their traditional lands for millennia, that connects all of the elements. Narrative inquiry has no such unifying force. She comments, "…trying to adapt critical ethnography, grounded theory or narrative inquiry to tribal epistemologies is a persistent intellectual challenge that is exhausting and potentially futile" (p.83). Where narrative inquiry anticipates research contribution in a general sense, there is no expectation of accountability to anything other than the experience itself, and to a great degree, the individual participants. For Kovach, giving back to community for the greater good of one's ancestors and families is paramount.

Indigenous Narrative Approaches

Considering next some of the work of Stewart (2007; 2008; 2009) and that which she has co-authored (Stewart et al., 2008; Reeves & Stewart, 2014; Reeves & Stewart, 2017) provides further insight into how Indigenous scholars have used narrative approaches. In the case of all but one of the articles reviewed, which describes a study that used Participant Action Research (Stewart et al., 2008), narrative inquiry is described as the methodology of this body of work. Stewart's doctoral dissertation (2007) provides rich insight into her thinking about methodology at that time. She writes:

> …narrative inquiry is one approach that fits the research question and is grounded in my theoretical basis of social constructivism. The Indigenous context is qualitatively different from other contexts, and social constructivism, with its focus on meaning making, links to my interest in the meaning of Indigenous mental health in a cultural context. "Methodology is important because it frames the questions being asked, determines the set of instruments and methods to be employed and shapes the analyses…. Indigenous methodologies are often a mix of existing

methodological approaches and Indigenous practices (Smith, 1999, p. 143). I am aware of the profound implications of this approach as well as its limitations.

Stewart (2007) further asserts that there is no cohesive methodology for narrative research, arguing that it is the incorporation of shared ideas and principles that makes research narrative. Having said this, she acknowledges that there is still work to be done to determine which ideas and principles are indeed shared under the umbrella of narrative inquiry. Recalling Clandinin's (2007) *Handbook of narrative inquiry,* a compilation of works by scholars using narrative inquiry in various ways contemporary to the time that Stewart completed her dissertation, Stewart's observation is fitting. In her later works that she identifies as narrative inquiry, Stewart references one of the chapters of this book that explores the particular application of narrative inquiry to Indigenous context, suggesting that the process of thinking through narrative inquiry in Indigenous contexts continues to unfold (Stewart, 2008; Stewart, 2009; Reeves & Stewart, 2014; Reeves & Stewart, 2017).

At least as manifested in Stewart's work, there are shared ideas and principles that are consistent with Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) work. They include the centrality of relationships, conceptualization of the researcher as embedded in the research, emphasis on stories told and co-created, analysis through coding of concepts, the use of field notes and journals, and discipline to consider the fullness of experience reflected in the stories told in context. Her work is similar to Kovach's in these same ways, but also in that it is predicated on Indigenous epistemologies, demonstrated in her dissertation by her use of the medicine wheel, and declared commitment to community and the duty to contribute.

The Mix of Methodologies

Stewart's use of narrative inquiry clearly is, as she quoted Smith, "…a mix of existing methodological practices and Indigenous practices (Smith, 1999, p. 143 as cited in Stewart, 2007). In

contrast to Kovach (2009), she uses much of the framework of narrative inquiry as Clandinin and Connelly (2000) describe, but intentionally adapts it to her context. Describing the negotiating entry phase that Clandinin and Connelly (2000) reference, she tells of meeting first with potential participants in person to begin to develop relationships before the work begins, offering each potential participant a gift as recognition of the honour of their willingness to consider the research, a cultural practice of her people. The data she collects is less about shared experiences and researchers' observations of them than respectful listening to stories that participants tell, and the ways in which they tell them. In this way she uses an approach that Kovach (2009) also advocates, centering oral stories to the exclusion of other sources of information that Clandinin and Connelly (2000) might include, considering the nuances of language and culture and the implications of colonization and its deconstruction. Stewart explicitly uses semi-structured interviews in her work, communicating the importance of using these as a guide for conversation, in contrast to Kovach's (2009) suggestion that conversation should emerge without predetermined framework in Indigenous contexts. Where Clandinin and Connelly (2000) consider member checking as a part of analysis and Kovach (2009) includes this in more general terms, Stewart makes member checking a stand-alone phase in her conceptualization of narrative inquiry. Stewart references concepts of three-dimensional narrative inquiry space but not as explicitly as Clandinin and Connelly (2000) would have researchers do, and this is consistent with her identification of shared Indigenous perspectives that echo those that Kovach identified, particularly the orientation to a holistic approach. Where Clandinin and Connelly (2000) assert that it is the story that emerges as a narrative of the experience that is the research, Stewart, like Kovach, is more interested in identifying themes that can be drawn from the stories that are told. Although Stewart finds room for the narrative summary in her dissertation, her subsequent work is perhaps more driven by the immediacy of the critical issues she explores in Indigenous mental health and thus focuses more on themes and their potential implications for action.

Choosing a Path

The work of Indigenous scholars like Kovach and Stewart offers tremendous insight into new ways that immigrant-descendants and immigrants can apply narrative approaches to develop the capacity to be the kinds of allies that Kovach in particular asks immigrant-descendants and immigrants to be, especially in the academy. Perhaps the biggest lesson I take away from these scholars is that research that is centred on individuals (remembering the "lifeworlds" of Habermas, 1989) as they are members of communities (recalling the "microsystems" of Bronfenbrenner, 1979), does not need to follow just one part of the journey. Rather than applying a methodology by following the steps that are laid out before me in linear fashion, even one as open as narrative inquiry as described by Clandinin and Connelly (2000), attending to the relational, holistic, respectful participant-in-context aspects of any inquiry may be a better guide.

Before leaving the topic of Indigenous researchers using narrative inquiry, I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge that beyond the confines of the specific reference to the methodology of narrative inquiry, many other Indigenous scholars use stories and narratives in their work (see for example Archibald, 2008; Benham, 2007; Thomas, 2015; Smith, 2012; Rix, Barclay, Stirling, Tong & Wilson, 2015). I have not included these authors in this summary because they are Indigenous researchers exploring experiences of Indigenous Peoples exclusively using varied narrative approaches that share much less with the dominant expression of narrative inquiry and much more with Indigenous research as characterized by Kovach (2009) and Wilson (2008).

An Anti-Oppressive Approach in the Indigenist Research Paradigm

Determining the best path forward for exploring this central question led me to consider several possible qualitative methodologies, but it was in reading through many of the chapters of Strega and Brown's (2015) book titled *Research as resistance: Critical, Indigenous and anti-oppressive approaches*,

that I found insight that complemented the Indigenist research paradigm (Wilson, 2007; Wilson, 200) that I outlined in Chapter 1. The conceptualization of anti-oppressive research as described in the chapter titled “Becoming an anti-oppressive researcher” (Potts & Brown, 2015), was most illuminating in my contemplation of methodologies for my research. Contrasting the relatively prescriptive methodology of narrative inquiry that Clandinin and Connelly (2000) describe with approaches to using narratives in research conducted by Indigenous, immigrant-descendant and immigrant researchers, it is clear to me that while the former has much to offer in terms of provoking thought about narratives as a means to understanding experience, there are constraints that did not fit as well with my research. Stewart’s application of narrative inquiry provides a more comfortable framework for this methodology for me. However, after reviewing the approaches to Indigenous research that Kovach (2009), Stewart (2007) and Wilson (2008) describe, and the question of my self-location and right to use knowledges that are not mine in a context that is, Potts and Brown’s (2015) framework of anti-oppressive research approach was most helpful in conceiving of the methodology and research activities that I, as an immigrant descendant, might undertake.

The anti-oppressive research that Potts and Brown advocate is overtly political, intent on fostering active engagement in social change. This is the first point of resonance with this study, and it is a differentiating feature from the narrative inquiry methodology that Clandinin and Connelly (2000) described. The authors locate anti-oppressive research as an expression of the epistemological perspective of critical theory. This aligns with my affinity for the work of Habermas and with my self-identity as a feminist committed to the core principles of social democracy. At the same time, it is resonant with the Indigenist research paradigm that Wilson (2008) suggests is first and foremost about personal change for the researcher and participants.

Potts and Brown describe four interrelated principles of anti-oppressive research, asserting that: "…it is social justice and resistance in process and in outcome" (p. 19), "…it recognizes that all knowledge is socially constructed and political, and, currently shaped by the neoliberal context" (p.19), "… [the] research process is all about power and relationships" (p.20), and "…anti-oppressive research foregrounds relationships" (p.21). All of these principles align with the work I am called to do at this time, and all are in keeping with my understanding of knowledge construction, power and the centrality of relationships in our human experience. I was especially taken with their statement that, "Through anti-oppressive research we construct emancipatory, liberatory knowledge that can be acted upon, by and in the interests of the marginalized and the oppressed" (p. 20). As I have noted previously it seems evident to me that while we contemplate how we might create ethical spaces of engagement (Ermine, 2007), preparing immigrant-descendant and immigrant faculty for ally work in walking forward in a new way together with Indigenous Peoples is in the interests of both the oppressed, and the oppressors.

Where Potts and Brown's (2015) work was most helpful to me when thinking about methodology and research activities for my work was in the integration of the political dimension combined with the liberation they offer from conforming to a specific methodology with attendant methods. Embracing uncertainty, as have the narrative researchers I reviewed, they make specific reference to identity and understanding self in this context, noting that anti-oppressive research requires one to take a critically reflexive approach.

This is further supported in a chapter in the same book by Fraser and Jarldorn (2015) that casts "Narrative research as resistance" (p.153). These authors advocate explicit attention to the inherent implication of power in narratives and the dangers of overarching narratives, like the grand narrative of modernism that Clandinin and Connelly (2000) referenced. They point out that narrative approaches can serve to perpetuate dominant narratives by ignoring the dynamics of power and the intrusion of

systems, in the way that Habermas (1989) described the intersection of the dominant culture in "lifeworlds". As Freire (1970/2000) also observed, the oppressed can perpetuate their oppression and the oppressors cannot see their place in the reinforcement of the *status quo*. Fraser and Jarldorn (2015) offer that critical reflexivity can encourage counter narratives and open us up to deeper understandings. Opting for this approach would certainly provide more raw and authentic sense of individual identity and the competing thoughts and feelings that might be come into play as we consider engaging in ally work for reconciliation.

As enthusiastic as I was about this approach, I realized that I was making some assumptions about the term "critical reflexivity". Not all authors who reference this concept define it, and a range of applications seem apparent. Thankfully Dowling's (2006) examination of the distinction between reflection and reflexivity and the various ways in which critical reflexivity can be employed in qualitative research contexts provided a helpful overview, with many references that contributed to a fuller understanding of related concepts and contexts. The following description of critical reflexivity made most sense to me in reference to the applications that Potts and Brown (2015) and Fraser and Jaldorn (2015) advocate, and in terms of my own research endeavour:

> It involves being aware in the moment of what is influencing the researcher's internal and external responses while simultaneously being aware of the researcher's relationship to the research topic and the participants. This view reflects the two principle types of reflexivity evident in published literature: personal and epistemological. (Dowling, 2006, p. 8).

Dowling notes that autoethnography, practiced with emphasis on reflections of self through a critical lens that seeks to surface the influence of culture, privilege and identity, provides one method for engaging in personal critical reflexivity. Autoethnography can be understood by parsing the word: 'Auto' refers to the self, 'ethno' to culture and 'graphy' to writing and analysis (Ellis, Adams & Bochner,

2011). Briefly put, autoethnography is an "autobiographical genre of writing and research that displays multiple layers of consciousness, connecting the personal to the cultural" (Ellis & Bochner, 2000, p.739). The critical difference between autobiography and autoethnography is the connection to cultural epiphanies where we see ourselves in moments where our culture, broadly interpreted, is made clear to us or helps to define our experience. Similarly, engaging with research participants to foster this same perspective could set the conditions for challenging the grand narratives that we draw upon for our identity formation, particularly those that have been so powerfully articulated for immigrant-descendants and immigrants by scholars such as Regan (2010) and Battell Lowman and Barker (2015). This approach would be more likely to expose the roots of what DiAngelo (2018) has termed "white fragility", and create openings for exposing and debunking assumptions we might carry, especially as regards the deficit perspective that is visited upon Indigenous Peoples in many contexts.

Epistemological critical reflexivity (Dowling, 2006) can include both the interrogation of assumptions that are made throughout the research process and the influence that the research question can have on the choices the researcher makes in investigating it. It embraces the examination of the interaction between the researcher and the research itself, observing and appreciating the influence of one on the other and learning and adapting throughout. Taking this critical reflexive perspective, Potts and Brown (2015) suggest adopting a more dynamic approach, allowing for the research to move backwards and forwards through the traditional phases of defining the research question, collecting data, analyzing it and reporting findings. This is consistent with the narrative approaches I have reviewed but also allows for more responsiveness than narrative inquiry as described by Clandinin and Connelly (2000). Potts and Brown (2015) consider the first step in research the "mess-finding stage" (p.23). This invites researchers to describe the mess they see that would benefit from illumination in moving forward for social change. In this stage they contend that the onus is on researchers to continually question the value of the work, especially as understood from the place that

researchers hold as insiders or outsiders to the experience, knowing that this positioning can change, just as Clandinin and Connelly (2005) observed can happen. As I think about faculty engaging in ally work towards reconciliation, they, and I, are outsiders to the experience of Indigenous Peoples. However, we are insiders to the dominant culture, in varying ways, appreciating the intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1989) that exists in our complex identities. I am sensitive to the potential charge that researching the experience of people in the dominant culture only shines the light once again on the dominant and in so doing, reinforcing it. As such, Clandinin and Connelly (2005) counsel openness to changing the research question and focus as the experience of the research unfolds and these implications are revealed and interrogated. Here too I saw a fit with my orientation to pragmatism and acknowledge the importance of considering ethical implications throughout all my work.

Potts and Brown's (2015) emphasis on approaching a research question from a community perspective held great appeal for me. These elements are consistent with questions raised by Clandinin and Connelly (2000), and with the positions that Kovach (2009), Stewart (2007) and Wilson (2008) have advocated. Potts and Brown (2015) contend that the intention of anti-oppressive research privileges community and understanding over concerns about representation and validity, contending that validity emerges from the alignment of the research to consistent perspectives and actions. Rather than random sampling, for example, they suggest that identifying people through relationships can be a better way of finding the right people to inform the research, accepting that this means that the research will be richer, but will not venture into the positivist orientation to generalizability. This raises the notion of constraints which the authors recognize and encourage researchers to identify as part of the ongoing exercise of situating and examining the research context. Ownership of information shared through the anti-oppressive research process is explicitly placed with the person who offered it, as a storyteller would own their story and have agency over its use as well, consistent with Kovach (2009) and Stewart

(2007). The centrality of relational accountability in the Indigenist research paradigm that Wilson (Wilson, 2007; Wilson, 2008) offers is clearly reflected here as well.

With these conditions in mind, Potts and Brown (2015) do not promote any particular methodology or method, indicating that none is by its nature anti-oppressive. Rather they suggest that research is required that employs methodologies that are participatory, relational, and based on listening to people, aligned with the Indigenist research paradigm. They reference narrative approaches in anti-oppressive research as framed by Fraser and Jarldorn (2015) as a promising option but invite researchers to consider a range of other qualitative methodologies and strategies of inquiry that are based on understanding experience as described by those experiencing it. As importantly, they promote making meaning of what is observed, heard and experienced throughout the research. Preferring the phrase "meaning-making" (p.29), to analysis, the dominant label, Potts and Brown (2015) go further than the other scholars whose work I reviewed. They assert that the dynamics of power are at play in this process too and suggest that researchers share conceptual frameworks and be attendant to negotiating the place of everyone involved in drawing out the resulting summaries that the research might evoke. Like the heuristic methodology that Moustakas (1990) offered, they invite researchers to step away from the information they have collected in their work as well to pause and reflect before jumping into the process of meaning making.

I struggled with applying the relatively narrow approach of narrative inquiry in the dominant culture as described by Clandinin and Connelly. I nevertheless saw an affinity in the use of narrative approaches that Indigenous scholars Kovach and Stewart offered together with the range of applications of narrative in research by a variety of scholars and the invitation that Wilson makes to consider an Indigenist research paradigm. Potts and Brown's description of anti-oppressive research which explores narratives in a critically reflexive way, provided me with an open, responsive approach to explore my

research question. Combining the Indigenist research paradigm with the anti-oppressive research approach permitted openness to emergent considerations of question and research activities, along with the flexibility to respond to these, that led to the research activities that I undertook.

Engaging in Ritual

Having prepared myself by striving to *live a congruent lifestyle*, *prepare the space* by exploring philosophical, practical, and methodological underpinnings, *assemble* the research design and logistics, it was time to *engage in ritual* with the research participants. Three rituals formed the research: individual conversations, a group conversation and autoethnographic observations.

To explore faculty experiences of coming to work on walking forward in a new way with Indigenous Peoples in the context of their roles related to curriculum and instruction, I held a series of one-on-one conversations with fifteen immigrant-descendant and immigrant faculty members at Royal Roads University, a small research university located in what is now described as Victoria, British Columbia, Canada. Following approval by the research ethics boards of the University of Victoria and Royal Roads University, an email was sent to all 74 regular-full time faculty members to ask for volunteers. Eighteen faculty responded to the invitation to participate. Due to time constraints and other unforeseen schedule changes, it was not possible to arrange for a suitable time to interview three of the volunteers. Of the 15 volunteers I met with individually, four identified as male and 11 as female. Five participants were immigrants to Canada and the remaining 10 were descendants of immigrants to these lands, two of whom self-identified as first-generation Canadians. All of the participants teach interdisciplinary programs – 14 in social and applied sciences and one in management – and all had been employed by Royal Roads University for a minimum of three years.

The ensuing conversations I had with each participant, allowing them to relate their experiences through storytelling and self-descriptions, were grounded in stories of their direct experience. I had prepared a series of questions to prompt conversation and referred to these on occasion, but they were not necessary. The conversations flowed easily and took different directions that followed naturally from the participant's response to an opening question that I adapted in the moment, but which reflected this query: "As you approach this work, what is going on for you?" Conversations ranged between approximately 45 minutes and over an hour and 15 minutes. All conversations took place between February and April 2020.

Having conducted this research in 2020, the year of the COVID-19 pandemic, when the "lockdown" orders were issued by the British Columbia Public Health Office on March 17th, I had completed nine of the conversations. One of these was held in my office and two took place in the lounge of Sneq'wa e'lun, the building where my office is on the Royal Roads University campus. Sneq'wa e'lun means Blue Heron House in the Lekwungen language of the lands where the Royal Roads University campus is located. My office is located there because of my responsibilities in supporting Indigenous education and student services and a sign of reconciliation that I as an immigrant-descendant sit with my Indigenous colleagues in that space. Holding these few interviews in Sneq'wa e'lun was symbolic of the participants and me coming to this special place to engage in the ritual of these conversations in the ceremony of research. The remaining six that occurred before the lockdown were completed in the participant's office on campus. The final six were necessarily conducted online, using a web conferencing tool, five on BlueJeans and one on Zoom. In only one case the participant and I both turned off the video feed early on in the conversation to improve internet connectivity; the rest were conducted with audio and video.

All conversations were recorded using a digital audio recorder, and in the cases of those conducted on a web conferencing tool, using the platform's video recording function. The texts of the conversations were then transcribed. In addition to reviewing the transcriptions, I re-watched segments of the conversations to contextualize and clarify as I reviewed them to make meaning, seeking key first points and illustrative examples. Having used a formal content analysis method in the research I conducted for my Master's degree, I was initially predisposed to use a qualitative data analysis software such as NVIVO to uncover themes. Having considered the concepts of dialogic interaction described in the previous chapter and read various perspectives of researchers on approaches to making meaning from narratives, I instead chose to look for places in our conversations where an interpretation coalesced as a meaning to me, as Fraser and Jaldorn (2015) suggest taking in an anti-oppressive narrative research approach. This was derived from both the words that were stated and the non-verbal interactions between the participant and me, and in most cases, key points as I understood them were easy to articulate. Meanings were unquestionably framed by my understanding, assumptions and biases. Themes emerged from key points in groups or as repeated points scattered throughout the conversation.

As Potts and Brown (2015) and other researchers counsel (Clandinin & Connelly, 2005; Moustakas, 1990), I stepped away from the results of the individual conversations before hosting the group conversation to give space between my experience of these and drawing meaning from them. This was somewhat deliberate, but I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge the extraordinary circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic at the time during the year that this research took place and the impact that it had on my life, personally and professionally. As a university administrator, in addition to overseeing my usual portfolio of responsibilities, the pandemic required a great deal of time and energy in responding and adapting to a constantly evolving external environment. The benefit of this

was the reflective time that I otherwise would likely not have created for myself. I am confident that the results of my meaning making were far improved because of this.

A summary of key points and themes of each conversation with each participant was drafted and shared for their review. Once each participant gave permission for their summary to be used in its final version, I further summarized the collective narratives and shared these with eight of the 15 participants who were able to attend a follow up group conversation, consistent with the orientation to this work as emergent and responsive to participants. I also showed the group a preliminary draft of the conceptual framework that I present in Chapter Five and invited reactions from those present. This group conversation was held in a web conferencing platform and recorded. I jotted down a few notes, spending most of the time engrossed in the conversation, and then returned to review the recording several times.

As all of these activities were underway, I recorded my autoethnographic observations. Responding to these epiphanies that the critical personal reflexivity that autoethnography intends to capture, these were unpredictable and sporadic. These observations took the form of written notes, images and musical references that reflected my learning. This fostered an ongoing orientation to critical personal reflexivity, reminding me to consider the influence of culture on my thinking and analysis.

Summary

Examining narrative inquiry and narrative approaches as I describe in this chapter made apparent to me that there is an appropriate place for exploring the experiences of immigrant-descendants and immigrants as we consider our place in the circle surrounding reconciliation through the stories we tell ourselves and create together. I learned a great deal about how I might contribute to

the anti-oppressive work of reconciliation through exploring the perspectives of immigrant-descendant and immigrant faculty as they contemplate joining the circle surrounding reconciliation. Resolving to undertake research activities that aligned with this thinking with an anti-oppressive research approach applied in the Indigenist research paradigm, led me to define research activities that resulted in rich data, thanks to tremendous generosity of the participants, that are described in the next chapter.

Chapter Four: Meaning-Full Conversations

In this chapter I describe the outcome of the *engage in ritual* stage of this research as ceremony, nine themes that emerged from individual conversations that were also discussed in the group conversation attended by eight of the 15 participants. I have defined *themes* as groupings of *key points*, thoughts and feelings that were expressed in individual conversations and the group conversation. This combination formed the meanings that I gained from the conversations. I shared a summary of the key points I heard with each participant and the resulting themes I had drawn from our conversation. I received confirmation from each that these reflected their contributions to our conversation and that the themes resonated with them. I summarized the themes and shared them in the group conversation. Participants in that inquiry agreed that they could see themselves reflected in them. The themes are *locating self*, *clarifying purpose*, *institutional challenges*, *relationships with Indigenous Peoples*, *relationships with Indigenous Knowledges, curriculum*, *teaching*, *self-reflections* and *what might help*. These are distinguished by italics for ease of reference here and in the chapters that follow.

In keeping with the narrative approach informed by both anti-oppressive and Indigenist research paradigms that I committed to in engaging in this research, I have intentionally eschewed a quantitative approach to surfacing the overarching themes and sought instead to reflect on what I was hearing from the collective of individuals through their words, as well as in their words. Having said this, unless where otherwise noted, key points were expressed by more than one participant, but it would not be justifiable to present these points as measurable, discrete or definitive.

Given the volume of information that was shared, and the number of key points presented below, I have listed the key points that emerged for me in each theme in a text box at the start of that section. Quotes from participants are included to privilege their voices as they illuminate the themes but given that each theme has many key points that comprise it I have not provided a quote to represent

each thought. Where an ellipse appears in a quote, it represents the deletion of a repeated phrase or non-sequitur. I have not identified specific contributors or provided descriptors of the participant sharing the quote to protect their anonymity. This was of particular concern because of the small complement of faculty at Royal Roads, 20 percent of whom participated in this research. Since these were conversations, and not interviews following a prescribed path, the themes are presented in a rough approximation of the progression that they often emerged in the conversations. Combined with my autoethnographic reflections, they comprise the findings of my research that form the basis for deeper meanings that are more than the sum of these parts. I explore these in the next chapter.

In previous chapters I have discussed both the evolution of my research question and the evolving methodologies and strategy of inquiry with which I tackled it. The experience of working to let go of strict adherence to answering this question, as anti-oppressive and Indigenist research approaches suggest, led to my first autoethnographic reflection. I insert this here in context, and you will find some of the autoethnographic observations that I found most impactful interspersed throughout this chapter. These are identified by a text box.

Although there has been opening up to the merits of responsive research activities in so many ways, and the anti-oppressive research approach I am taking points me in this direction too, as I am practising this I find it hard to let go of the linear approach that is inherent in the dominant culture in which I was raised – and the way I have been socialized through education to complete an assignment. We have had some visiting Indigenous scholars at work that we had contracted to provide us with a report with specific deliverables. They recently submitted their report, and it is not exactly what we had asked for, but on reflection, it is what we NEED. This reminds me of the teachings that Elders have shared with me: that I will be offered opportunities to learn and grow if I am open to them. This is a different way of being and thinking. As I continue to meet with my research participants, I will have to continue to work at being open to letting the conversations guide where they should go and not force them to serve my research question.

Locating Self

Ancestry

Family of origin

Personality traits

Building self-awareness

Commitment to social justice

Experiences – scholarly and professional

In every conversation I held with participants there was a natural gravitation to locate themselves in the context of the conversation without a specific prompt from me to do so, most often represented through stories. In every conversation we also discussed our involvement in work to better understand Indigenous Peoples and our role in educating ourselves and others in the topics raised by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission through its Calls to Action. Participants frequently identified the inescapable influence of who we are and our lived experiences on this. Participants referred to their ancestry and family of origin most often, but also spoke to the roles they hold, what they described as their natural inclinations or personality traits and the impact of the place(s) where they grew up on who they are as people today. Not surprisingly, immigrants located themselves as having been born and, in all cases, raised for a good part of their lives in another country. One immigrant participant who described themselves as white expanded on the psychological self-location in this work as well, stating simply and clearly, "Yes I live here, and yes, I work here, and I am part of this, but this is not…part of me."

Many of the participants spoke to ongoing sensitivity to building self-awareness, and their commitment to continued learning and engagement in socio-political issues as well. One participant shared this observation:

> …when we are direct descendants of people who come from different countries, we do have different experiences and different perceptions and I think it's important for us to understand what those perceptions are and what that means then for understanding what Canada is.

Lived experiences, such as childhood stories and anecdotes about development into adulthood, figured prominently in many conversations, as did their educational experiences from elementary school through to their doctoral work. Not surprisingly, experiences they had as teachers and researchers were often called upon to locate their sense of place in this work. For some who held academic administrative or other professional roles during their careers experiences in these contexts were referenced.

Clarifying Purpose

Respect for Indigenous Peoples

Emotional connection to commitment to act

Colonialism as a global problem

Considering culture

Exploring reconciliation

Calls to Action as catalysts

Land acknowledgements as symbolic acts

At some point in our conversation each participant expressed a desire to contribute to this work in a good way and to provide a sense of place. All conversations touched upon the purpose of coming to join the circle surrounding reconciliation in their work as faculty members. Many participants described their respect for Indigenous Peoples and cultures, and immigrant-descendants and immigrants alike expressed sadness about the past and its legacies for Indigenous Peoples, occasionally pausing to gather their composure or even shedding tears. Many immigrant-descendant participants shared incredulity that the truth about Indigenous Peoples in these lands was not taught in schools or exposed by the media. One participant described their coming to this work in this way:

> I didn't have a lot of experience or knowledge of Indigenous relations, for whatever reason…so I think I was a little slow to join in or my energy was a little slower than I would have liked given that I was so focused on social justice for so many groups of people, vulnerable groups of people. But I think it was because of frustration with myself that I didn't know more.

In some cases, immigrant-descendants stated that they feel shame and anger, and that they sometimes have difficulty managing their emotions in addressing these subjects.

Those who were born in other countries mentioned the impact of colonialism on their ancestors and described parallels in some of the experiences of their ancestors and families as colonized and oppressed peoples. There was a good deal of discussion around unpacking culture and the meaning of the word *reconciliation* in many conversations as well. Two participants specifically referenced the L.P. Hartley quote that “The past is a foreign country; they do things differently there” (Hartley, 1953, p.1). I interpreted this as encapsulating their reflection that it is indeed difficult for all of us to reconcile the past, another theme that I recognized as running through several of the conversations. One of these participants went on to say:

> My interest in all of this was about being able to see your own world so that you can appreciate that other people don’t live in your world; that their worlds are as fascinating as yours, if only you care to look. That there are historical relations between worlds…in the same way that the past is a foreign country…your other’s world is also a foreign country and you will never belong but you can visit and they can visit you.

The desire to think and act respectfully was expressed by participants as grounding their responses. In this vein, one participant captured another common sentiment, paraphrasing the quote attributed to Dr. Ruth Benedict that describes the role of anthropology as “making the world safe for human differences” (Haviland et al., 2017, p. 402). At the same time as this human cause was identified, participants often acknowledged that there is a moment in time for this work right now and reinforced the importance of respecting, celebrating and lifting Indigeneity. The Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (2015) was described as a “as a carrier of story and voice” and they saw the

Calls to Action as catalysts, referring to them as the "minimum standard." Some observed that the Calls to Action are specific to disciplines that were most implicated in the oppression of Indigenous Peoples in these lands, but that all education programs can contribute to positive change. Adding to this, one participant who self-described as working in allyship with Indigenous Peoples for many years stated: "…it's harder in a place like this when you get the Calls to Action because it's all new to everybody and…now there's a mandate. So there's an urgency to do work and I think that makes it more challenging."

Dissatisfaction was expressed with the way in which land acknowledgements are conducted, and parallels were drawn by participants that these are symbolic of the purpose of this work. Participants described the intent of these land acknowledgements to recognize publicly in group gatherings that the Lekwungen and Xwesepsum ancestors and families, now known as the Esquimalt and Songhees Nations respectively, have been part of the lands where Royal Roads University is located from time immemorial. Some observed that these acknowledgements have become rote, however, relying entirely on a PowerPoint slide that allows the user to simply play the recorded message from Songhees Nation elected Chief Ron Sam. Others suggested that people want to do the right thing but are afraid of mispronouncing the Nation names or otherwise unintentionally causing offence. These observations often led to discussion about making the work of reconciliation truly meaningful and well supported.

Institutional Challenges

All of the participants declared their interest in contributing to reconciliation, and all of them identified barriers within the institution that impede their ability to do so. The lack of systemic ways to meaningfully engage in this work was a common theme and participants were often quick to

acknowledge the magnitude of the task of shifting paradigms of curriculum, assessment and even the nature of teaching. Several participants expressed some frustration with the expectation that they should be able to teach topics that are not within their areas of expertise without providing them with systemic supports. As one participant stated: “The principles are good but the expectations are that we should deliver results without a full appreciation of the system that needs to be in place to get those results.” Another spoke more colourfully:

> Lack of systems
>
> Unrealistic, unclear expectations
>
> Insufficient time, support
>
> Clash of constructs
>
> Influence of institutional leaders
>
> Constraints of systems of dominant culture
>
> Over-reliance on few Indigenous Peoples

> …you’re asking me to purple-ize my curriculum and I’m not a purple person. I don’t have purple history; I don’t have purple knowledge. Where do I begin? And even in my own training and development as a scholar, as a practitioner…that has never been a lens.

In a similar vein, while all participants expressed a clear understanding for themselves of the overall goal of reconciliation, many expressed uncertainties about the objectives that the changes that they are being asked to make and the measures that they can use to test their success. Reflecting this sentiment, one participant noted that:

> There seems to be the expectation you have to change what you’re doing and include something, but it’s not clear what that is, or should be, or how do you prove that you’re doing that? There is an expectation to do something different, but at the same time it isn’t clear what that is, or how you would prove that you checked the boxes, or enough boxes.

Many expressed awareness of, even frustration with, the influence of constructs of the dominant culture and the juxtaposition of Indigeneity and modernity as embodied in the institution. They cited the chafing of institutional power structures and systems that allocate resources and define roles, as reflected in these comments:

> …. we're going to go into a meeting this afternoon and we're going to have to deal with this question: "Well, where are you going to get the market to take that [Indigenous topic] course?" We're talking about one course maybe every other year. I'm thinking, well, like okay so if we only get ten in there, we'll cover the cost of that course and then the rest of the program will make the profit. But just think of the value of us offering that course in terms of what we're saying we're trying to do. So there is a sense that you have to fight different battles administratively.

> I can't keep putting energy into that, banging on a wall, when it's not going to go anywhere and it's a tragedy because it just means I don't have the power to do it and it's being cut off, it's being blocked and stopped and pushed on a shelf by someone else for some other reason and I don't know what those are, and maybe – you know, I don't know everything either and I'm being presumptuous assuming this is how it needs to be, but we do know a lot about how culture works, and we do have good, you know, insight into ways and we're happy to help, is the other thing. Like, we're happy to do the work. So it just gets frustrating that it gets blocked. So, I guess I feel like it's leadership in our current context because they hold so many of those little levers and spigots and finding resources, blah blah blah. It would be great if it wasn't that way, though.

> I always feel quite inspired but also incredibly tired immediately and that's partly because there's so little support and so little space in our work plans and all of that.

Lack of understanding of the work that must be done to engage meaningfully with Indigenous Peoples in order to build relationships, gain fluency with the topics called for in the Calls to Action and respectfully conduct research in these areas was raised by many of the participants. Some participants raised the point that words and actions by academic and senior institutional leaders can have an influence on willingness of faculty to invest time in this work – positively when there is support and flexibility, and negatively when there is not. One participant was not optimistic about the chances of being given space for this work by adjusting expectations of outcomes in other areas but reflected a desire to do work with colleagues who are similarly challenged. They stated:

> So my challenge, if I had the energy to do it, and do it on my own time, is to radically strip the course of so much information but I don't want to do it by myself. I want to do it with colleagues. If we just sat down for five minutes, we could come up with a beautiful way to make a course that was based in eco principles, Indigenous ways of knowing and being, and deep feminist principles.

Class size was cited as a barrier to relational engagement with students to facilitate and navigate the difficult conversations that are necessary in learning environments where topics such as the Indian Residential School era, Sixties Scoop, intergenerational trauma and disproportionate number of murdered and missing Indigenous women even today are explored. Class size also contributed to concerns expressed about time available to invest in learning to achieve fluency with topics that are not within an individual faculty member's area of expertise.

Continuing expectations that the outcomes of scholarly activities align with traditional assessments pointed to the mismatch between value systems of the dominant culture and what is needed to value and promote reconciliation work. The process for promotion through the ranks articulated in the collective agreement requires a review by a committee of peers that examines a candidate's record of scholarship. Notwithstanding shifts in what is considered scholarly work (Brinkman et al., 2014; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Given, 2012), these evaluations continue to be most heavily weighted towards evidence of contributions to traditional peer reviewed academic publications. Further, approaches to research that are more aligned with an Indigenist paradigm that emphasize relationships and participatory engagement can take longer, and thus the faculty member is less able to produce as many articles as they might have done had they used more traditional methodologies. While there is acceptance of a wider range of approaches to research, according to some of the participants this has not translated into acceptance of other forms of evidence of scholarly activity. The adage "publish or perish" appears to still apply.

According to some participants, one consequence of this is that not all faculty are willing or able to make time to engage in this work. As one participant observed, "…there's a lot of support from the people who are around the table, but not everybody's around the table." It was noted as well that just because faculty do not participate in meetings and professional development activities related to this work does not mean they are not supportive of or active in this work. One participant stated, "…not showing up in person doesn't necessarily mean people aren't showing up in other ways."

While there was a great deal of openness expressed about changing curricula and approaches to teaching and learning facilitation, there was some concern about retaining the best of what post-secondary institutions offer our world. As one participant observed, "The university is a western institution that is what it is…and it's got something that people want and I would be worried about

making it something unrecognizable." Another participant reflected on the dangers of post-secondary institutions using reconciliation as a feature of their market positioning in what they referred to as "branding in the business of education." They went on to say:

> I also want to work in a meaningful environment…I don't want to just work for some organization. I can do that anywhere. I might as well work for a corporate sector [organization]…I want to work in an environment that is progressive and walks its talk.

Yet another participant commented on the fickleness of institutional priorities and expressed concern that reconciliation work not become just another "wave." They described this pattern:

> We just kind of go with whatever the flavour is and pay it a little bit of lip service, but it's not as intentional and useful and productive as it could be. Like anything we do that's of value, we get a little value out of it and we leverage it a little bit but not very much because we're on to the next thing.

For all of these participants, the challenge of reconciliation in the institution was one of making real meaning of this work in every respect of institutional activity and life.

Acknowledgement of the demands placed upon the very few Indigenous employees and contractors who have been involved in this work at Royal Roads University, and regret for the toll that this burden has seemed to take upon them, was expressed by many of the participants. For some participants, this recognition made them less likely to reach out to build relationships or ask for help. As one participant noted when reflecting on why they have not done more to include Indigenous advisors in their curriculum development: "…I think that I feel guilty because I know the volume of work that [they have] to do and I really don't feel that my needs are sufficient that I should be taking away from the other things.

Relationships with Indigenous Peoples

The importance of creating and fostering positive relationships in their work in general and most especially in working with Indigenous Peoples was recognized by every participant, reflecting the relational accountability that Wilson (2008) describes. There was a strong desire to build relationships with Indigenous Peoples, especially those in local communities, but participants expressed that it is not clear how best to do this.

Desire to build relationships

Lack of access, opportunity

Protocols unclear

Time constraints

Fear of offending

Patience with process

Some participants began by recognizing natural barriers to relationship building. General discomfort with meeting new people in unfamiliar situations was raised, noting that their lack of knowledge about proper Indigenous protocols increases the probability of doing something inappropriate and thereby their vulnerability to criticism and failing to make the desired connection. One participant characterized this as "…longing for those authentic relationships and thinking I'm there and may be not quite there yet." Others acknowledged that truly mutually respectful relationships take time to develop and expressed that they are already pressed for time to devote to the primary relationships in the personal and work lives. Making space to invest in activities where they might have the opportunity to meet Indigenous Peoples and to build relationships with some seems daunting given the other competing priorities in their busy lives.

Most participants however cited their greatest concern to be lack of knowledge about how to meet Indigenous people in authentic ways to build reciprocal relationships. There was a strong sense of awkwardness about reaching out to create relationships when the participant knows that they need the help of an Indigenous person but have little to offer in return. Some expressed that this is compounded by a sense that they represent the dominant culture that has oppressed Indigenous Peoples and the

guilt and shame that accompany the realization of that oppression. Participants who had some experiences working with Indigenous Peoples shared concerns about knowing what to expect in different contexts, appreciating the complexities of the histories and protocols of many Nations and myriad experiences of Indigenous Peoples. Some told stories about how they had built successful relationships with Indigenous communities or individuals, only to have the same approach be rebuffed by others based on misunderstanding of protocols and expectations. This left them unsure of how to move forward with the same or a new community or person and sometimes resulted in wariness that cautions action. One of the two participants who referred to the L.P. Hartley quote that “the past is a foreign country” went on to connect this notion to its impact on our understanding of and relationships with Indigenous Peoples as follows:

> It is not a country that you can easily just learn about by reading about it and just having a few interactions… there has to be a way where you’re living within it more. And we are still so segregated here.

As faculty members who have built expertise in a wide range of applied and professional interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary areas, many of the participants indicated that they would very much like to share their experiences and insight with communities where it might be helpful, and to support reconciliation generally. That said, they often indicated reluctance to reach out for fear of appearing to assume that their help is needed. Participants who had been engaged in research with Indigenous communities or organizations in the past, or were at the time of our conversation, indicated that they had been invited through relationships that they or other scholars had built with these communities or organizations over time. Participants who had engaged in research and practice with Indigenous communities in other lands sometimes noted that they had found their participation in those communities more welcome. There was an appreciation that for the Indigenous Peoples of the lands we

now call Canada there is seemingly much more healing to be done, and while they are motivated to engage where they are invited and believe they can add value, there was acknowledgement of the process of coming to a place where the community might be ready to engage. One participant described this:

> You have to get that out of the way. You have to sit through it, you have to wait, you have to be blamed for everything, and then you have to get on with what you came to do. I found that really quite difficult.

The positive outcomes of working through that difficulty are cherished, however. Paraphrasing an Elder/Old One who took part in a photo-voice activity in her community, at the outset the sentiment was "well I don't know what this is about, but I'm pretty sure that the white man's going to screw the Indian again." By the end of the activity, the participant remembered that the same Elder/Old One had said, "This was so good for our people because sometimes my people don't have the words, but having the pictures really helped us say what we wanted to say." This recognition that there is still a lot of work to be done to build trust was expressed by many participants with some regret, but with optimism that through building these relationships, real positive change can result.

I'm reading the *Best Canadian Poetry 2020* anthology and came across the poem "louise" by Dallas Hunt (Wapsewsipi). It conveys his memory of watching his great-grandmother make bannock. She has the word "awâs" tattooed on her hand – "go away" in her language. The last line is, "there is no word for benevolent white men in my language" (p.52). I am no longer surprised by the damage my dominant culture ancestors have caused Indigenous Peoples, but I continue to be surprised by the emotions that come with seeing my culture in this way. I read Paulette Regan's book and am aware of, and even know about unsettling my inner settler, and I continue to appreciate how much more work I need to do to truly *understand* as Kaleb Child laid out for us.

Relationships with Indigenous Knowledges

Many of the participants observed a welcome alignment of the Indigenist research paradigm and Indigenous axiology, ontologies, epistemologies and methodologies with contemporary pedagogy and research. Regarding pedagogical similarities, participants referenced openness to values, challenge- and place-based learning, emphasizing reflection and integration of knowledge and developing learning communities. Qualitative methodologies generally were described in relation to parallels in research activities, noting the use of narrative approaches and participatory action research as examples.

Commonalities – current and past

Meaning of Indigenous Knowledges

Content and process

Global Indigeneity

Knowledge as unknown, inaccessible or proprietary

For some, there was acceptance that there is knowledge that cannot be known by those who are not Indigenous and openness to including content and facilitation practices that they do not fully understand. One participant shared a perspective they take when faced with these unknowns, borrowing from the comic strip, *Calvin & Hobbes* by Bill Watterson that was syndicated in popular media from 1985 to 1995:

> Well…is Hobbes a real tiger or not? He's a real tiger when Calvin is in the room. Right? And he's always drawn as a real tiger when Calvin's alone in the room. Right? Does the fact that Dad's now in the room make him any less real to Calvin? No.

Some participants observed that the interconnectedness between our human psyches and the natural world is common to the human experience, particularly noting that traditional teachings of

Indigenous Peoples are often like those of our ancestors, no matter where their homelands might be around the world. One participant described this as follows:

> I don't want just a component on this, I want to bring council practice, a circular practice that's been practiced in Indigenous communities pan-culturally and has been since humans met around fires. That should be woven in all curriculum. Like these ways of being and knowing are ways of being and knowing of being human.

The majority of participants expressed desire to better understand Indigenous epistemologies, more commonly expressed as Indigenous ways of knowing and being. Several participants raised questions about the distance between Indigenous and contemporary knowledge systems. These participants noted that contemporary dominant culture has much more variation in what is understood as knowledge and referred to their understanding of Indigenous epistemologies as seemingly resembling the constructivist epistemological stance. Some queried whether differences between Indigenous and contemporary knowledge systems lie in approaches to learning and communicating than about knowledge itself. For example, one participant shared this experience:

> …she and her son were presenting on a story – stories as teachers…and she spent the whole-time telling stories. It was beautiful. Lots of stories about animals especially. But then her son did an interesting thing where he…picked up on what she was doing, he explained how he was learning from her. He demonstrated story telling but then he did that technical thing of asking us all to now, you know…take note of how stories work. So it was teaching about stories rather than using stories to teach. And so in that part he was…trying to explain how...we think that stories are absolutely transparent and commensurable across cultures, but different cultures treat stories differently. And especially when you have such a radical cultural difference of

> modernity versus Indigeneity. And…he kept it to his own people, but he said basically…we don't have morals to our stories, at least not that we would tell anybody about. And you don't treat a story in that way. You allow people to come to their own… meaning, to construct their own meaning around what that story means for them in that moment.

Exploring this notion further, considering the role that stories play in different cultures as this participant argued can be one way to explore ontological and epistemological stances and knowledge transfer. Surfacing our assumptions about the intentions that storytellers have, along with appreciating their self-location in the culture and even the story itself, can challenge our preconceived notions about what knowledge is and how it is shared, helping us to appreciate others' ways in comparison and contrast.

For others however, the meaning of Indigenous Knowledges is unclear. This lack of clarity makes many uncomfortable with the task of incorporating these into their curricula because they do not have confidence in understanding what is meant and how it is manifested. While the process of coming to know something and sharing that knowledge was readily understood as place-based and culturally contextualized, there was an eagerness expressed by some to understand whether there is a real difference in content. One participant used the metaphor of coming to a bridge where you have been told there is a different land on the other side, but never quite getting across that bridge. They described attending meetings and professional development activities designed to help them better understand Indigenous Knowledges as going to the bridge, hoping each time that they will get across, but being disappointed by the emphasis on how you cross the bridge, not what is on the other side.

These participants were more likely to identify the need to validate knowledge that they might include in their teaching. One participant maintained that there is a place for positivism in

understanding the world and that the scientific method, even applied in a general sense in the social sciences, is the most reliable way we have of really knowing something. A second participant articulated this as follows:

> A lot of those sorts of myths and stories and narratives are rooted in some very – as it turns out – very real phenomena and processes. But sometimes they're not. The challenge for me is making sure that whatever I'm including in my curriculum, whatever I'm including in my teaching, has some verifiable facts and from an academic perspective to me that means empirical evidence so if I'm incorporating Indigenous perspectives and stories in my curriculum, I want to find those which have been supported by some empirical studies.

The theme of Indigenous epistemologies has been coming up in my conversations with some participants lately. This discussion of how we know what we know and whether than can be different in different cultures is very interesting to me. Is there only one way of knowing? As Plato suggested, is there one truth that human experience can only approximate? I doubt it. But it has got me thinking about how difficult I found my first doctoral course where we were first introduced to the "ologies" – axiology, ontology, epistemology, methodology. It occurs to me that maybe I and many of my fellow students found that so difficult because in the dominant culture we are not challenged to think about how we know something, whereas in many Indigenous cultures, there is more emphasis on learning to know in the way that story telling is as much a learning tool as it is the communication of the story itself. The way that the story teller does not fish around for the listener to get the one moral of the story, but lets the listener divine their own meaning. Or maybe it's just because I have been inculcated in 20th century positivism and had trouble seeing how knowing could work any other way.

Many participants remarked on the need to contextualize local, national, global Indigenous Knowledges, cultures and experiences. While they advocated for an openness to understanding global Indigenous perspectives, appreciating the wide range of Indigenous Peoples, cultures and experiences

around the world, they spoke of the need to show respect for local communities by giving the ancestors and families of these lands primacy in their curricula and the learning experiences they create for their students. Whether regarding Indigenous Knowledges of the ancestors and families of these lands or the far reaches of the globe, these participants indicated that it is often not clear to them how to validate what is shared with them. As one participant questioned, “What’s the knowledge I should depend upon? Is it local knowledge? What is that? How does that apply to students who are not local?” A few participants shared that they largely rely upon peer reviewed journals to provide a measure of endorsement, but as a result are constrained in the type of sources that are therefore available. Involving individual Indigenous people such as Elders/Old Ones and other Knowledge Keepers can be fraught with uncertainties about whether what that person shares is consistent with the understandings and perspectives of other Indigenous Peoples, not just from faraway places, but even within the same local community. There was a good deal of discomfort expressed by some participants with the awareness that they might be criticized for having invited a particular Indigenous person in to participate in developing curricula or a specific learning experience with their students, knowing that the person’s knowledge-sharing might not be accepted by others.

Some participants observed that one of the reasons that an Indigenous person might be criticized for sharing knowledge is that others might say that the knowledge is proprietary, understanding that stories, songs and roles are owned by individuals and families in some Indigenous cultures. Difficulty with understanding the notion of proprietary knowledge was expressed, noting that their sense of purpose is rooted in the generation and dissemination of knowledge. That knowledge could be held back when it might be beneficial to others was one concern raised, along with the concern that they might be in a position to have proprietary knowledge that might be important to their work or

research but bound by the relational accountability they understand to be necessary, and thus not accessible to them.

I have just written to Carmen to tell her that I don't want to rush to get a draft of my dissertation to her in time to give her time to review it before sharing it with Cathy and Ted [my committee members] for their feedback and then sending on to the external examiner in time to defend this semester. I was feeling like I was rushing things because I was trying to meet a self-imposed deadline to be done by the end of this year. And then it dawned on me: This is what Shawn Wilson is talking about when he talks about relational accountability to ideas. I could understand relationships with ideas – as in having a pet theory or not getting something and struggling with that idea. But this is a new layer. This is accountability to giving ideas their due. This is about not rushing to finish to meet my dominant cultural expectation of performance in a given time frame. This is about letting the seeds of the words of my research participants take hold, nourishing them and giving them time to grow.

Curriculum

In many conversations there was explicit acknowledgement of the boundaries that self-identity can create for content that is included in a learning experience. Some told stories about having been asked to teach courses that were largely focused on the experiences of Indigenous Peoples and expressed their discomfort with this, realizing that these courses should be taught by Indigenous instructors. As immigrant-descendants or immigrants shaping curricula for courses that are not mainly focused on the experiences of Indigenous Peoples, participants' sense of agency in integrating topics related to Indigenous Peoples ranged from having no place to speak to speaking from their own experiences.

Content

- Integrated
- Scaffolded
- Values-based
- Respectful
- Theory to practice
- Accessible
- Critical
- Boundaries and agency
- Opportunity for self-location

Process

- Relational
- Meaningful
- Sensitivity to power and privilege
- Exercising critical thinking
- Curiosity
- Storytelling

I began each conversation began with reference to what is going on for the participant as they approach reconciliation work and then let the conversations naturally evolve thereafter, but none of the conversations came to focus on the specific topics articulated in the Calls to Action for post-secondary institutions. Having said this, most participants at some point in the conversation referred to their self-assessment of their fluency with these. Without quoting the language of the Calls to Action, participants referenced the topics that the Calls to Action suggest should be included in identified post-secondary education programs and for members of the public service as well. Excerpting from the latter, these topics include:

> …the history and legacy of residential schools, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Treaties and Aboriginal rights, and Indigenous teachings and practices. This will require skills-based training in intercultural competency, conflict resolution, human rights, and anti-racism (Truth & Reconciliation Commission, 2015, p. 3).

The key points raised related to this theme that emerged around curriculum refer to the inclusion of these topics. There were two sub-themes that emerged in this larger theme that reflect the key considerations in designing learning experiences: content and process.

Content

The points raised in the previous section about relationships with Indigenous Knowledges most certainly impacted the approach that participants described taking in developing curricula. That said, each of the participants spoke at some point in our conversation about the need to interweave Indigenous Knowledges and perspectives into their curricula, seeking integration over tokenism. How they approached this differed, and many described thoughtful pedagogical approaches of moving from concrete/safe to unknown/riskier topics in their curricula as they consider including Indigenous Knowledges and topics related to the Calls to Action, recalling Vygotsky's (1978) scaffolded learning theory. Some participants spoke of the opportunity that these topics create to expand student values clarification work and to engage students in deeper thinking and discussion through a well conceived curriculum.

Echoing earlier references to participants' desires to be respectful in this work, there was recognition of the importance of acknowledging the wide range of Indigenous Peoples and cultures in the lands we now call Canada and around the world. Objectives stated by participants included avoiding pan-Indigenous assumptions, taking the time to understand the Nations upon whose lands the physical campus is located and respectfully including their input and perspectives. Likewise, some participants made clear their appreciation of the damaging effects of presenting content in any way that might reflect or reinforce the assumption that oppressed peoples are deficient and in need of the help of the dominant culture. There was also recognition expressed of the opportunity to debunk contemporary narratives of immigrant-descendant/immigrant engagement with Indigenous Peoples and communities, both positively and negatively. Though there was general recognition of the latter, one participant articulated an appreciative approach to exploring the past:

> There were relationships that were very important: historical relationships, partnerships. People have been working together for so long on goals, social justice goals, treaty land claims, negotiations, education. I mean, this isn't something new. So within the larger post-colonial landscape and conversations about colonialism, and now it's settler colonialism that is the new hot topic. There was always this very polarized way of looking at things. So I'm interested in the nuances.

Participants also spoke to the importance of making curricula accessible to a wide range of students and creating learning opportunities that encourage curiosity and connection. One participant shared their approach to having resources for teaching topics that address Indigeneity: providing resources that open up questions for students of all ancestries to reflect upon, examine knowledges and practices of a wide range of ancestries, call out dualistic assumptions and seek where there are commonalities. Several participants identified the opportunities to learn from theory in practice accessing a range of disciplines and taking inter- and trans-disciplinary approaches. One participant framed this as follows:

> …this is the thing about theory is that it allows you to make the normal strange to yourself so you can actually see it. And what better way than to bring in some of the examples from some of the research and events I go to and the people I've met and the stories I've heard to help people see something they're not familiar with.

Finding a balance for students to see themselves in curriculum was identified as important by some participants, one of whom characterized this challenge as,

> …speaking to a broad audience in a way that can benefit that audience as a whole and at the same time recognizing that not everyone's going to be happy, but we still need to do our best

> and land it in a way that people are learning things that can be used in a positive way and again towards reconciliation.

Another participant spoke to drawing from the practice of *métissage* research and the Indigenist paradigm, emphasizing what they referred to as opportunities for students to "…slow down, be curious, be humble".

In all cases, participants expressed sensitivity to the unique and primary focus on Indigenous Peoples in this work, and many told stories about scholarly activities that they had been engaged with that gave them insight into examining the influence of constructs of the dominant culture and understanding various forms of oppression. Some participants specifically spoke to how Feminist theory and approaches can offer insights into working with the topics called for in the Calls to Action, and there was reference to synergies with areas of expertise that have been applied in other jurisdictions, such as dealing with inter-ethnic conflict. Transferring their knowledge and skills from other contexts was cited by participants as an approach to understanding the experience of Indigenous Peoples in ways that are connected to their own lived experiences. Building upon this, some participants stated that they structure learning experiences intended to respectfully link to other forms of oppression that students may experience or have greater appreciation for. This helps them to access greater understanding when including topics related to the Calls to Action. Some participants referenced the opportunity to show alignment between theory and practice by exploring theories of the dominant culture as applied to Indigenous Knowledges and the topics called for in the Calls to Action, and *vice versa*. At the same time, they recognized that they could only speak to their understanding of these from their perspective as a person who is not Indigenous to these lands. This frequently raised acknowledgement of the importance of self-location for themselves and for their students. Some mentioned the appeal of place-based

learning in its grounding in land and location and its affinity with the constructivist epistemological stance that considers meaning making more holistically.

Building on this self-location, some participants addressed the challenges they face in interrogating the choices that they make in determining curricula, knowing that they cannot escape their lens of privilege. For example, one reflected on the dangers of assuming priorities for oppressed peoples from the lens of privilege, citing the example of women who are oppressed by governing structures based in religious dogma but whose greatest challenges are economic, not their rights as women to participate in that governance. This in turn raised the recognition of the importance of validating not just the information shared through curricula or the way it is presented, but also the emphasis that Indigenous Peoples would place on topics that best reflect their lived experiences.

Process

Observations of the ways in which content can be presented within the overall structure of the learning experience were made in almost all of the conversations. A common point was raised around the need to create ways for students to meaningfully engage with content, as participants acknowledged that students have relationships with one another, with the instructor and with the content. One participant encapsulated this as follows:

> How can we provide the information that doesn't…this is a difficult conversation…that doesn't threaten their identity but leaves them open to think? I also need to do some work to reconcile. Ideally that's what I would like to be able to do is find a balance where I am able to invite my students whoever they are, to get on the journey.

It was noted that topics related to the Calls to Action can require a good deal of time to process and thus require commensurate space within the learning experience timeframe to allow for learning and application. Participants suggested that wherever possible curriculum design should consider

potential power dynamics that might come into play in an activity or assignment. Some participants suggested opening up ways for students to explore a range of perspectives, including those with which they may not agree, by provoking questioning that focuses on the argument made, the theoretical perspectives that can ground or inform it or the values that various perspectives embody. Asking students to take a perspective that they find uncomfortable in activities such as debates or assignments that require the argument of a given position were suggested to encourage student engagement with the topics that the Calls to Action invite students to explore. Continued emphasis on critical thinking, exercised in a good way, was captured by one participant who said:

> I hope that what we do in our curriculum is encourage people that wherever your information is coming from, take a critical perspective, be respectful, be understanding, but don't automatically assume that what people are telling you is correct.

Several participants advocated strongly for the use of storytelling in curricula related to these topics as well, especially untold stories. These participants were specific about the importance of privileging Indigenous voices in educational resources including in curricula. They spoke to the opportunity to allow for all students to share stories that reflect their lived experiences as long as they are provided the tools and support to learn to locate themselves in their stories and refrain from telling the stories of others.

The juxtaposition of storytelling and essay structure led to some questioning by participants as to why the essay remains the preferred format for communicating ideas in the academy. Contemplating this, one participant reflected, "we aren't really opening to even new paradigms of any kind. I don't know that we've really reflected on how we evaluate things. I think we still use the same old structures and expectations." Some participants did speak however to increasing use of spoken word and visual

artifacts, such as creating assignments that require or give students the option of producing a podcast or video rather than the ubiquitous essay.

Teaching

All of the participants identified the critical role that they play in creating open and respectful learning environments. The ability to hold space for engagement around the topics included in the Calls to Action was reflected by many as both a privilege and a challenge. Participants noted that seeking an awareness of where each person in a learning environment is in terms of their knowledge and understanding of the experiences of Indigenous Peoples helps in navigating group dynamics. Having compassion for students, and themselves, was described by several participants as important to staying focused on seeing opportunities for growth and change. Participants suggested approaches such as turning defensiveness into invitations by asking students to consider another perspective or to interrogate their assumptions. Watching for assumptions that students or they themselves might be making was also identified as important to facilitating learning as these provide opportunities to challenge underlying beliefs, reflect and reconceptualize. Appreciating the deep roots of systemic racism, participants spoke to the emphasis they place on diversity and inclusion.

Embracing the role

Creating space

Navigating group dynamics

Compassion

Invitations

Assumptions

Diversity and inclusion

Revealing untold stories

Political polarity

Cultural appropriation

Honesty

Indigenous voices

Where spaces have been created in curriculum design for stories to be told, participants highlighted the challenge of surfacing untold stories that may lie within the learning community and the

balance of safety and support that is necessary for individuals. The purpose of this was described by one participant as:

> Not to facilitate the disclosure of everyone's stories, but to understand how as a country we have this narrative, as a class we have this narrative that we're constructing as we are moving forward in the next couple of weeks or the next couple of hours. How is it that we can work better together will require a certain about of understanding of history of society and how we can make it better?

Some participants told stories about difficulties they had encountered in teaching in these topic areas that arose from the political polarity that is seemingly characteristic of our socio-cultural context. They spoke to what one participant characterized as lateral violence amongst students, referring in this context to negative behaviours that are directed at one's peers, rather than the source of the problem. They described witnessing students verbally berating one another, citing examples such as a vocal student or group shaming other students and the resulting silencing of students who might otherwise ask questions that would allow them to learn more about the experience of Indigenous Peoples. This was described by one participant in this way:

> …it's hard because everybody brings a level of trauma to these conversations…so how do we support each other in working through that? And how do we hold each other accountable to showing up in a good way? …we need to be able to shut down lateral violence and say, "This isn't acceptable regardless of your cultural background."

One participant told a story about having to navigate a learning community dynamic in which there was a small group of students who self-identified as colonialists. This participant paraphrased the perspective that these students took as, "we want to reframe how colonialism has been perceived as

aggressors in the past and we want to focus on the positive legacies that have been created for us as we move forward in this great nation." This participant regretted that this small but vocal group made surfacing truths difficult and stifled open dialogue amongst all members of the learning community.

At the other end of the spectrum, participants also identified concerns about the role of "thought police" that some students seemingly have assumed. According to one participant,

> They become people always looking for mistakes, who are always looking for proof that their cohort members are allies. They don't do this only on this issue, but this is a favourite. This is sort of part of the bouquet of righteousness. …people are branding themselves with their politics. They're branding themselves with their alliances and ranking each other on…if you've got the right alliances or not. More and more me and my colleagues are silencing ourselves because we don't want to get called out by the righteous students who come to our classrooms looking for microaggressions.

Another participant shared an experience where they had used a circle format in a learning activity which was derived from their practice in conflict mediation. Much to the participant's surprise, an Indigenous student later expressed concern that this had been an act of cultural appropriation. Fear of being accused of appropriating approaches from Indigenous cultures that are becoming more common in the dominant culture was expressed by some participants. This was especially disconcerting for participants who described themselves having embraced these approaches to learning facilitation for some time. One participant wondered aloud, "…it sounds fancy and at the same time it doesn't sound any different from what I do. So does that mean why I do is right? Or does that mean we're all pretending?"

Participants identified that instructors need to be able to address difficult situations honestly with respect for individuals but shared a range of self-assessments of their ability to do this well. Some participants noted that although it is tempting to do so, it is important to avoid rationalization of the greater good, placating positions when difficult interactions emerge because this chafing can lead to greater learning. This is made even more tempting by the constraints of time, and, as one participant bravely noted, because it is easier and safer. One participant advocated that instructors could see themselves as coaches in these learning contexts. Rather than conceiving of themselves as the star athlete who leads only by example, applying this metaphor, this participant suggested that the coach understands the context and can share information, set out opportunities for practice, and guide students as they develop new skills and abilities to assessments where outcomes are not win or lose, but are about how one plays the game.

I am constantly reminded of the gift that each person is giving me by sharing their insights and time. As these conversations are unfolding, I continue to be struck by the vulnerability and frankness that people are willing to share that I had worried would not be forthcoming. Each of these conversations is an ethical space of engagement. It has made me realize how our dominant culture structures for engaging around institutional work – committees, working groups, etc. – allow less space for relationality and less patience to wait for those who are less willing to speak up in these environments. I can see how someone (like me!) can unbalance discussion by holding too much room in the room. There is a very strong message here for me to find ways to exercise relational accountability in my work and in my life. There is also a clear connection between relational accountability and ethical spaces of engagement. This has led me to contemplate how I can more explicitly practice the expression of relational accountability to manifest ethical spaces in different contexts.

In several conversations, the necessity of including individual Indigenous people in learning environment activities were highlighted, along with the challenges. Bringing Indigenous Elders/Old Ones, Knowledge Keepers, scholars and practitioners into the learning environment was elaborated

upon by several participants as critical to giving voice to Indigenous content in a respectful, grounded and appropriate way. Having recognized this, participants acknowledged the limitations of individual Indigenous people, appreciating that each person's lived experience is different and that their roles and knowledge may be very different from one person to the next. Several participants also identified the challenges of making appropriate invitations to Indigenous people to join in a learning activity, not knowing who to contact, how to find them or the right way to make an invitation, including being able to provide a respectful honourarium or other compensation. Many participants observed that the same Indigenous people are often asked to join learning activities repeatedly and that a university community can quickly exhaust an individual.

Self-Reflections

Embracing their professional and personal roles

Uncertainty

Energy

Competence

Confidence

Commonalities

Privilege

Immigrant lens

Strengths

In each conversation there was a theme around self-reflection that related back to some of the aspects of how they see themselves and the influences on who they are as people approaching this work described in their self-location. Participants generously shared some self-reflections throughout the conversations, at times explaining something that had been sitting with them for some time and at other times hesitantly phrasing emerging thinking after pausing to consider as the conversation unfolded and they could hear their own voices or respond to a question that I posed. These moments assured me of the reliability of the information that was being shared with me, supporting that this conversational approach was providing insight that was authentic, at least in the moment.

Each of the participants articulated that they have a role to play in making positive change as immigrant-descendants and immigrants walking forward in a new way with Indigenous Peoples through their work as faculty members. Almost all of them spoke to their commitment to extend this into their personal lives as well. The desire to contribute to work within the institution was tempered by uncertainty for almost all participants, however, and for a few this uncertainty was compounded by fear. Uncertainty was expressed around many of the points raised in the section above describing comments related to relationships with Indigenous Knowledges and Indigenous Peoples. As one participant put it: "…as an academic the tool of your trade is knowledge…and then you're basically in a situation where…there's the cognitive territory that is out of your reach." Acknowledgement of fear was most often related to fear of judgement by Indigenous Peoples, faculty peers, administrators or students. There was reference to fear of losing one's composure in front of others as feelings of guilt, shame and sadness can emerge as they continue to grapple with the harsh realities of the past and present for Indigenous Peoples. Some participants elaborated on the paradox that is created when their deep sense of the importance and urgency for real and persistent change meets with this uncertainty and fear. One participant expressed this this way:

> My feelings are mixed I would say, and they're mixed in terms of energy levels, excitement and dread – and it's just that time in history…to have that mix of emotions…it's constantly moving back and forward between these states of being, these states of feeling. Sometimes in the same moment and then learning how to hold all of that in my body…so it's like holding a paradox all the time, and a set of them.

A few participants observed that these mixed emotions can sap their psychological energy and that they can quickly find this work tiring. Some participants recognized that this work challenges their sense of competence and self-perception of having agency in their work and that this in turn reduces

their confidence and thereby their willingness to engage in it. One participant described the uniqueness of this work in this way:

> I don't have that anxiety and concern about anything else. And I talk about internationalization freely, I'm not an international student. I'm confident in my area. I talk about [topic]. It doesn't mean I'm all knowing, but I can have an intelligent conversation and set up some learning outcomes. I don't feel I have that skill set with Indigenous topics. How do we know if we get it right? How much forgiveness is there for getting it wrong? What exactly are we after? I feel a pressure of perfection…so it shuts me down.

Another participant described their approach to settling in to this work as follows:

> I feel incompetent generally as a teacher…teaching is such a tender, dangerous, sensitive, delicate place that you're dealing with peoples' hearts and souls and many people in our classrooms regardless of who they are culturally are afraid…or they are wielding knowledge that is dangerous if they don't fully understand it. So I'm always on edge as a teacher. But when it comes to working on anything to do with Indigenous ways of knowing and being or Indigenous politics or whatever, I never feel competent at all. I've just learned to relax into a general feeling of self-aware incompetence, and I don't ever expect to be competent.

Others had resolved to take Wilson's (2008) invitation to adopt an Indigenist paradigm and described their place in this work as reflected in this participant's statement:

> I don't need to be in a position where I'm trying to claim that I have an understanding of what all these things are and the long history of what all of these things were and how it happened…I'm never going to have the lived experience for that but it doesn't mean you can't respect the lived experience and what that brings to the table.

This notion was expanded upon by a participant who characterised their place in this work by distinguishing between the ability to know about something and to know something:

> I'm horrified by the numbers of children who are taken into care who are Indigenous. And I am horrified when you look at the percentage of our inmates in prisons who are Indigenous…I can speak to that feeling, but I can't speak to the experience.

Describing their self-reflection on their place in this work another participant commented:

> I'm not supposed to save this world. I don't think that's the work that I'm supposed to do, but I'm supposed to fully belong to it. And how that works is going to be different for everyone. And I think that is my obligation and that's maybe where I feel some of my strength lies. I feel confident in keeping working on, you know, this being human and becoming more human. I feel confident in that.

At furthest end of the spectrum, a small number of participants expressed competence and confidence in this work but were discontent that they are not recognized within the institution for holding experience and knowledge that can help.

Several participants talked about how they contextualize themselves in this work by appreciating the common roots of our shared human experiences. These participants observed that not so long ago, their ancestors, and in one case their immediate family, had suffered the consequences of colonialism. Several participants stated that they work hard to see from the perspective of the oppressed and some participants shared that their ability to understand oppression was sometimes influenced too by their personal experiences as members of marginalized groups. There was recognition of some shared core values for which there is greater expression in the dominant culture than was the case in the past, though this may be difficult to see at times in an increasingly politically polarized world.

Participants referenced returns to truth over stereotype, diversity over monoculturalism and love over hate. All of this was contextualized in an awareness of a lens of privilege and recognition of the positions of power and privilege that participants occupy simply by virtue of their educational attainment and employment status. Some voiced that it is challenging to navigate building relationships with Indigenous Peoples where the differences in power and privilege can be so stark.

For immigrant participants there was a common theme of being an outsider to Canadian society to varying degrees. For one participant who first came to these lands as a child, their sense of place was impacted by their continuing connection to the land of their birth and resonance with the experience of colonialism in that country. For those who came to these lands as adults, there was a clearer sense of distance from the guilty-by-association feelings expressed by some immigrant-descendant participants. Some immigrants noted that they are often misunderstood because of the assumptions we make of others based on how they look or speak. These can create challenges to their ability to do this work or to create relationships because decisions have been made about them that may not be accurate even before the work begins.

The moments in the conversations where these deeper self-reflections were shared were sometimes emotional and the weight of this work was acknowledged, but in no case did this colour the entire conversation. Overall, participants were optimistic about making change, especially engaging with other faculty in this work with the support of Indigenous advisors and scholars. There was also recognition of the strengths that participants bring, self-described when prompted. These were most often described as reflectiveness, resilience, and openness to learning and becoming along with lived experiences that they draw upon in this and other work.

What Might Help

Recognizing the importance of this work, participants suggested actions that the institution might consider providing to faculty members. There was general agreement that there is a need for safety to explore, learn and make mistakes to foster a culture where they and their colleagues will be willing to continue to try. Openness to creating and fostering a climate where understanding and support rather than judgement and control were felt was described as critical to the success of this work.

Safe spaces to explore

Understanding and support

Connection with Indigenous Peoples

Resources for land acknowledgements

Dedicated time

Community of Practice

More Indigenous colleagues

One participant recalled a workshop titled, "Walk with me: Responding to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's Calls to Action through participatory theatre " that had been developed by the School of Leadership in partnership with Shirley Alphonse (Cowichan/T'Sou-ke) and the late Nadine Charles (Scia'new), members of the Heron People Circle, and poet and theatrical artist Krystal Cook (Namgis) that had been offered in 2018 and 2019, drawing more than 100 employees over three sessions and receiving very positive participant evaluations. This was described as an example of the opportunity that arts-based inquiry provides when carefully supported for people to engage in learning and contemplating action.

Many participants identified that they would prefer to have one-on-one conversations with Indigenous people about curriculum, teaching and research. Several advocated for having Indigenous education advisors and scholars available who could guide them in this work, providing validation of content and educational resources and providing an avenue for sanctioning curricula through Elders/Old Ones and other Knowledge Keepers. Although some participants expressed that they thought it was a

small thing to raise, the importance of making meaningful land acknowledgements was raised by several participants as an example of an action for which they would appreciate more support. They suggested that a rubric for making a land acknowledgement meaningful in various contexts would be helpful. Such a rubric would describe how to make a land acknowledgement that is more natural and connected to the purpose of the gathering, along with coaching on how to correctly pronounce local Nation names.

Throughout the conversations, participants referred to the importance of making space for them in their work to build relationships directly with Indigenous people, particularly Elders/Old Ones and other Knowledge Keepers. Acknowledging the benefits of sharing and mentoring with other immigrant descendant and immigrant faculty and instructional designers, some participants suggested that a Community of Practice be established as a safe space where they can learn from one another. It was pointed out that there are no regular full-time faculty members or instructional designers who identify as Indigenous Peoples of the lands we now refer to as Canada at Royal Roads University at this time.

There was some discussion around whether Indigenous faculty members and instructional designers would be comfortable joining a Community of Practice. Concern was expressed that the presence of Indigenous people would offer richness and guidance but might cause some immigrant-descendants and immigrants to defer to them as experts expected to carry the work of the group. This might keep some from engaging at all, for fear of showing their ignorance or making mistakes. Being inclusive and respectful of Indigenous people while at the same time creating a space where they thought their peers would be willing to engage in a safe space was expressed as a dilemma for which no clear conclusion was offered.

> And under that is love and compassion and forgiveness, for ourselves, for the mistakes we make, that we sense others making, for our gaps in knowledge. And if we can help the non-Indigenous faculty member especially feel that they have a way to manage the discomfort, that they have a way to walk with the not knowing, with all of those feelings I was telling you about…then that will be as important as helping the Indigenous faculty member manage those feelings of discomfort. And trying to create a space for discourse. Trying to create a space for sharing the stories of why we feel the way we do, why we want what we want, why we're worried, what we're dreaming of…I think that would be so exciting for people.

Regarding opportunities to contribute to reconciliation through the expertise they had to share by virtue of their education, research and experience, some suggested that a systemic approach to matching needs and wants determined by Indigenous Peoples with the knowledge and skills that they and their students might possess would be helpful. One participant characterized this as creating "…a meaningful bridge instead of just a parachuted item…because bridges go both ways and parachutes you just jump out of." Although they acknowledged the need to be invited to do this work, there was a strong sense of wanting to be of service where that service would be welcome.

The most common and heartfelt request from participants for the institution was to increase the number of Indigenous employees in all areas, but especially Indigenous scholars, education advisors and instructional designers. Adding Indigenous representation to the committee that approves new and updated curricula was specifically suggested, along with an appeal for increased representation of Indigenous people at all levels of institutional governance.

Summary

The conversations that I had with the participants as we *engaged in ritual* were full of so much meaning. While this chapter has described the meanings that I have drawn from these thus far, I expect that I will continue to reflect over time and continue to find more and more meaning. These reflections will undoubtedly be influenced by my accountability to the relationships I have with the people involved and the ideas that have emerged. In the next chapter, I begin the work to honour the meanings presented here by *incorporating into my lifestyle* the things that I have learned.

Chapter Five: Gathering Around the Fire

Potts and Brown (2015) contended that anti-oppressive research seeks to make meaning from the information that is garnered throughout the research process, rather than conceptualizing this task as an analytical exercise based on categories and counts. Following their approach, and in the context of the theories and concepts that I reviewed in Chapter Two, in this chapter I summarize my ruminations on the findings I presented in Chapter Four, along with observations of the results of my concurrent autoethnographic inquiry. I expand on ideas that evolved throughout the research process and include my reflections on the experience of the methodology and method I employed in conducting the research and include Wilson's (S. Wilson, personal communication, February 2, 2020) description of research as ceremony summarized in the first chapter.

In the first section I offer my observations of the conversations in the context of key theoretical and methodological concepts that grounded this work. The second section summarizes my reflections on the autoethnographic observations through the lenses of theory and method. In the third section I propose a framework that I created from both the key points that participants made and from reflection on how we place ourselves in this work. Rooted in these conversations but describing meaning that I extracted from the entirety of the research experience, this framework considers how immigrant-descendant and immigrant faculty might place themselves in order to engage in reconciliation work: positioning themselves to consider the intersection of their self-assessment of their confidence and competence to act in that particular context. This framework is the catalyst for a number of suggestions that I expand upon in my next and final chapter, suggestions for supporting the conditions to help us to shed our mental cages and sit in ethical spaces around fires of action on the journey towards reconciliation.

Observations of the Conversations

Exploring Social Transformation

Throughout my conversations with participants there was consistent reference to the overarching purpose and responsibilities of reconciliation work, reflective the words of Dewey, Habermas, and Freire. Dewey contended that: "the task of democracy is forever that of creation of a freer and more humane experience in which all share and to which all contribute" (Dewey, 1939, p.229), Habermas stated that "freedom conceived intersubjectively distinguishes itself from the arbitrary freedom of the isolated individual. No one is free until we are all free" (Habermas, 2002, p.82) and Freire (1970/2000) called for liberating both the oppressed and their oppressors.

Dewey and Habermas' claims were supported by participants' references to their own desire to contribute to making the world a better place for everyone by their own involvement, and by fulfilling their role in engaging with a diverse range of students. These observations often led to discussion about making the work of reconciliation truly meaningful and well supported, siding with Indigenous scholars who have argued for some time for deep engagement from all peoples in this work (Darlaston-Jones et al., 2014; Davis et al., 2017; de Costa & Clark, 2016; de Leeuw et al., 2013; Pidgeon, 2016).

As Dewey also asserted, there was a strong orientation to finding what will work as we journey towards reconciliation given myriad complexities in myriad contexts. There was discomfort however with the recognition that in finding what works, mistakes can be made at the cost of one's own feelings or the feelings of others. Participants explicitly acknowledged, with deep regret and sadness in many cases, that Indigenous Peoples have been oppressed and dehumanized, as Freire (1970/2000) defined these terms. Participants' words reflected that they desire liberation from what Ermine (2007) called our mental cages and understanding that as Freire (1970/2000) asserted, this liberation is necessary for them, not just for those who have been oppressed. There was an overarching sense of commitment to

Freire's conscientization, and thus accepting Ermine's challenge of freeing oneself from these mental cages through developing this critical consciousness. This was particularly evident in the *institutional challenges* theme, notably related to observations of the impact of structures of the dominant culture such as academic regulations, institutional policies and procedures, and the collective agreement. These structures were seen to create individual problems or privileges influenced by and interconnected with structures of power, depending on self-location for themselves and for their students. This was further evident in the *curriculum* theme where participants referred to the role that critical theory, and especially feminist theory, can play in supporting reconciliation work by challenging dominant cultural perspectives and ways of being and doing. Given that all participants hold a doctoral credential and teach in interdisciplinary applied areas of study, it is perhaps not surprising that they should articulate familiarity with the socio-political context and interplay of structures of power, including seeing these through the lens of theory. Statements such as "How can we provide the information that doesn't…that doesn't threaten their identity but leaves them open to think?" and "…take a critical perspective, be respectful, be understanding, but don't automatically assume that what people are telling you is correct" indicated that participants understand that if we conceptualize our difference in imaginative ways there is more likely to be positive interaction for change. There was recognition of Freire's caution against "false generosity" (Freire, 1970/2000, p.55) in the awareness of the need to avoid the deficit-perspective that assumes that Indigenous Peoples are lacking and in need of help from the dominant culture, and the reluctance expressed around offering their expertise to Indigenous communities without invitation.

Participants' descriptions of constructing curriculum that is inclusive of a wide range of perspectives, as well as their expressed intentions of their teaching, also aligned with Habermas' (1989) concept of the public sphere as a place where all are able to express their views and thereby engage in

true democracy. Participants expressed a range of perspectives that challenge the reasonable possibility of approximating Habermas' ideal of the discourse theoretic model of democracy described in Chapter Two that relies upon the equal participation of all in dialogue. There was recognition of the continuation, amongst themselves and their students, of the expression of power and privilege and the conditions that stifle open discourse.

In their roles as teachers, participants observed that there remains tremendous variability in the degree to which members of a group have grappled with the constraints of their mental cages and the systems that perpetuate them, presuming that they are even aware that they exist. The normative content that arises from the structure of the communication that takes place within that group may therefore not ultimately be reasonable or fair. Activities that expose and explore power, bring to the surface shared concerns and include diverse perspectives were identified as ways of counteracting this content in learning environments. While some expressed discomfort regarding the time, skill and emotional work that this can require of them, there was nonetheless a strong desire amongst participants to create learning environments that work towards the ideal of the public sphere.

My research question did not specifically propose to uncover the "deeper level thoughts, interests and assumptions that will inevitably influence and animate the kind of relationship the two can have" (Ermine, 2007, p.195) as Ermine articulated in his observation of the antecedents of interaction in ethical spaces of engagement. This had nevertheless been in my mind as I was forming the intent of the research. I was ultimately gifted with personal and poignant stories and insights and I was tremendously grateful for the degree to which participants shared their thoughts, interests and assumptions. As I considered the themes that had emerged it was clear that the meanings that were revealed to me were about how these faculty members see themselves in the context of their experiences. The meanings

resonated more with Bronfenbrenner's ecosystem of human development and were less about the interior self of the individual.

Theory Through Stories

As participants told their stories, I was privileged to be able to catch a glimpse, coloured of course by my own, of the lifeworld that according to Habermas (1989) each person experiences. Recalling Habermas, the shared norms and values that result from our interactions and communications construct a lifeworld for each of us, one that is influenced by the intervention of systems such as the bureaucracy of institutions. The interplay between lifeworlds and systems was particularly apparent in the comments that participants made regarding *institutional challenges*. References to the influence of constructs of the dominant culture and the conflict between Indigeneity and modernity were indicative of this, as were observations regarding the restrictions that policy structures and collective agreements can have on alternative ways of seeing things and responding. The recognition that words and actions of academic and senior institutional leaders have influence on faculty choices was evidence of the interference of hierarchical systems and the tension that power can create to impede or promote full participation.

The three types of knowledge that Habermas identified as the objectives of communication, technical knowledge, practical knowledge, and emancipatory knowledge (Habermas, 1971) were all apparent in my conversations with participants. Technical knowledge was evident in their reflections on factors that influence things and events, particularly in the *curriculum* and *teaching* themes. Examples of practical knowledge that focuses on understanding between people to reach consensus and create community were raised most often in the *clarifying purpose* and *teaching* themes. Expressions of seeing oneself in the socio-cultural context, or emancipatory knowledge, not surprisingly dominated the *self-reflections* theme, but were also shared in the *locating self* and *clarifying purpose* themes.

Expanding the notion of Habermas' concept of lifeworlds with the ecological system of human development that Bronfenbrenner proposed (1979), participants' comments in the *locating self* theme placed them as individuals at this point in time as they understand themselves in terms of their age, gender identity and personal characteristics. This theme was underlined by their unique microsystem of family, friends, colleagues and acquaintances. As some participants described family histories reaching back generations, and they reflected on the impact of these legacies on their lives today, the chronosystem became clear. Participants observed the role that post-secondary institutions have to play in realizing the goals of the Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and its Calls to Action. Their specific references to the institutions of government and education supported Bronfenbrenner's conceptualization of the exosystem and the influence of institutions on their lives and work, primarily in the *institutional challenges* and *self-reflection* themes. The context of the exosystem was less evident in participant comments than other aspects of Bronfenbrenner's model which might be expected, given that it refers to the elements of our environment which with an individual has less direct interaction.

The influence of the macrosystem was more frequently referenced however, as this represents the attitudes and ideologies of the culture in which an individual is situated. Participants referred to the influence of constructs of the dominant culture and the juxtaposition of Indigeneity and modernity as embodied in the institution and observed the influence of dominant culture in the behaviours of their students. For those who had been asked to teach a course that was centred on Indigenous Knowledges, the macrosystem was evident in their discomfort with representing histories and ideologies that were not their own. Comments that demonstrated the macrosystem at play occurred most prevalently in the *institutional challenges*, *relationships with Indigenous Peoples* and *relationships with Indigenous Knowledges* themes.

The interplay of all of these elements through the mesosystem was sometimes very clear. Specific examples of the impact on the microsystem of their relationships and work of constructs of the dominant culture that represent the macrosystem were identified most often in the *institutional challenges* and *curriculum* themes. The definition and measurement of faculty work, as described by a collective agreement and interpreted by academic administrators, was highlighted, connecting the dominant paradigms of the macrosystem and the relationships that an individual has in their microsystem. The collective agreement acts as an artifact of the mesosystem by defining the nature of and time allotted to outputs that are rewarded in annual workplans, based on the values of the macrosystem. In so doing, it directly affects the choices that faculty members make with their time and energies to deliver on these workplans, knowing that these are connected to the reward structures for merit increases and to evaluations included in promotion decisions. The observation that participants made that there is continuing reliance on the essay as the primary tool for assessing student performance positioned the essay as an artifact of the mesosystem. As one participant noted, "…we aren't really opening to even new paradigms of any kind. I don't know that we've really reflected on how we evaluate things", thus noting how the values of the dominant culture are carried through in grading systems that privilege a particular form of writing that is uncommon outside of the academy.

It was notable that participants who self-identified as immigrants acknowledged that most immigrant-descendants are challenged by lack of understanding of the experience of Indigenous Peoples because that experience was hidden from the dominant culture in a range of ways. They each noted however that they faced difficulty in appreciating the full social context because the ecosystem of human development that was the context for their formative years was characterized by differences in the various systems. Their ecosystems of human development seem to have been directly affected by the point of their entry to Canada in the chronosystem, particularly as their experience of the

macrosystem was influenced by the attitudes and ideologies of the Canadian context. This is observed in the contrasts they recognized between their own experiences and those of their peers who were born in the lands we now call Canada.

Immigrant participants were more likely to express a sense of distance from responsibility for deeds done in this land we now call Canada, with all but one of them stating this, but they were no less likely to accept their place in the circle surrounding reconciliation. This type of commitment was perhaps not surprising given that the participants self-selected to engage in conversations knowing that reconciliation was the subject of this research. Although participants observed that their peers who do not regularly participate in this type of activity are not necessarily less committed to the cause or engaged in this work, it does beg the question of how those who did not self-select to participate might describe their commitment to this work, suggesting one of many possibilities for further research that I with return to in the next chapter.

The chronosystem was evident in participants' stories that had occurred in the past and the influence that these had on them. There were many examples of these, but perhaps the most emblematic of this was the statement that one participant made reflecting on the timing of their engagement with reconciliation work, noting that "…I was a little slow to join in…than I would have liked given that I was so focused on social justice…But I think it was because of frustration with myself that I didn't know more". Here the participant reflects that their behaviour of the past was less representative of the way they see themselves as they consider that self-perception from their perspective at this point in time. As they reflect on what differed then that they have since resolved, they note that they had not at that time learned about the history and current realities of Indigenous Peoples in these lands we now call Canada. Thus, they observed their developing consciousness-raising over time and the mental cages that can bind us. The chronosystem was observed in participants' comments about the impact of the

Truth and Reconciliation Commission, and its Report and Calls to Action. They noted the historical context of relationships between Indigenous Peoples and immigrant-descendants and immigrants, and the present opportunity to make change that was not so evident in the past.

Expressions of Praxis

As described in Chapter Two, Freire coined the term “praxis” to describe the exercise of our own power to act against oppression, observing that social transformation results from the collective expression of praxis (1970/2000). In Freire’s conceptualization of praxis, action does not emerge in isolation, however. Freire believed in the necessity of an ongoing cycle of action and reflection. Thus, reconciliation can be framed as a humanization problem: in order to transform our world, Freire invites us to join the circle – an expression of praxis. This approach was evident in my conversations with participants: they told stories about the actions they had taken, reflecting on these and their engagement in continuing this work. The themes that emerged around *clarifying purpose* and *self-reflection* embodied engagement while there were many examples of actions provided throughout the conversations, captured primarily in the *curriculum* and *teaching* themes.

Sennet (2012) suggests that three social skills are critical in difficult contexts where cooperation amongst diverse peoples is required, as in the circle surrounding reconciliation. This was evident in our conversations, where participants were oriented towards dialogic interchange, practised subjunctive expression and understood their place in empathy, rather than sympathy, with Indigenous Peoples. In every case, participants spoke to the need for new ways of moving forward for their own understanding of reconciliation and in teaching students, rather than creating negotiated compromises that dialectical approaches produce. The participants also identified the challenges of navigating power dynamics in *teaching* and their desire to mitigate these. This might be achieved by providing students with invitations framed in subjunctive language to help them open up to other perspectives based on

knowledge they may find difficult to accept, as the history of Indigenous Peoples of these lands we now call Canada can be hard to hear and comprehend. There was also overt acknowledgement of the boundary between their experiences and those of the oppressed, and thus participants naturally gravitated to positions of empathy, rather than sympathy.

Several participants told stories about ways they have approached reconciliation work that reflected the tactics that Snowden and Boon (2007) suggest are necessary in taking on complex challenges: "…probe, sense and respond, create environments and experiments that allow patterns to emerge, increase levels of interaction and communication, and use methods that generate ideas" (p.73). At the same time, almost all participants expressed that their individual acts of probing, sensing and responding had, in the past, challenged their self-assessment of their competence and confidence for engaging in this work. Perhaps as a natural consequence of this, there was unanimous agreement that environments that allow for high levels of communication and interaction that permit experimentation were desired, with the caveat that these be focus on learning and not on judgement. The theme *what might help* contained references to these types of actions that participants saw as helpful and productive, such as making space in their work to build relationships directly with Indigenous people and the creation of a Community of Practice as a safe space where they can learn from one another.

Shifting dominant culture approaches to praxis, as Wheatly and Frieze (2011) propose, was apparent in participants' stories and statements. These include: "scaling up to scaling across" (p.20), "power to play" (p.50), "problem to place" (p. 74), "efficiency to resilience" (p. 102), "transacting to gifting" (p.130), "intervention to friendship" (p.160) and "hero to host" (p.188). There were specific references to each of these in many of the individual conversations, and it was most informative to hear these come together in the follow-up group conversation. Participants talked about exercising their power to act against oppression in the reconciliation work of their roles as curriculum developers and

instructors, designing and implementing learning spaces that are characterised by these features. Participants spoke of creating ways to share their learning and experiences as peers and the need for a respectful, contextual approach to curriculum development. They would attempt to continue this approach in their development as instructors, as they undertake teaching content and methods that are unfamiliar to them – seeking scaling across rather than scaling up, play instead of power, and resiliency more than efficiency. Appreciating the importance of place in Indigenous cultures, participants acknowledged the necessity of correcting pan-Indigenous assumptions, approaching their work in ways that respect the ancestors and families of the Nations that host the university's campus on their traditional lands, while at the same time understanding that there are myriad Indigenous cultures across the globe. There was general understanding amongst participants, explicit and implied, that the problem of reconciliation that Carey Newman (2017) placed in the centre of the circle can only be considered in the context of place. Participants reflected preferred ways of being as instructors and as colleagues in their comments. They spoke of gifts, to themselves and to their students, of time, space and support, rather than keeping track of reciprocity in a traditionally transactional way. This would be done with care, so to host opportunity for these gifts to be shared, rather than them acting as the hero. Commitment to friendship, avoiding intervention, was expressed most in the theme that emerged around *relationships with Indigenous Peoples*, where participants communicated interest in creating real relationships with Indigenous Peoples and the discomfort that they feel in having knowledge or expertise that might help Indigenous Peoples or communities, but knowing not to show up uninvited.

Perhaps because they are all scholars exploring theory and research in interdisciplinary applied and professional contexts, there was clear evidence of Bishop's (2015) spiral approach to becoming an ally in the stories that participants told. Bishop suggests that would-be allies move through the process of placing ourselves, reflecting, analysing, choosing strategy and acting, returning to placing ourselves

and again moving forward. Participants spoke most obviously to placing themselves in the themes of *locating self* and *self-reflection*. Their observations in the theme of *clarifying purpose* demonstrated the analysis that they undertake as they approach this work. Choosing strategy and acting were most evident in the stories shared in the *curriculum* and *teaching* themes, though there were observations shared in the *what might help* theme that expressed strategic choices and action. It would be difficult to describe reflection as a single stage in participants' described processes, however. Participants seemed to be reflective in an integrated way at all stages, suggesting an orientation to critical reflexivity.

As participants told their stories, the points along the continuum of understanding that Child invited education students to consider where they sit in their journey in Aboriginal Education", were also evident (Child, 2018). This continuum was anchored by awareness, followed by points titled knowledge and understanding, and anchored at the other end by advocacy/action. It was clear that all of the participants possessed high levels of awareness of the work of reconciliation and its myriad complexities. It was equally as clear that, while they all desired to be advocates and actors in the work of reconciliation – and many had done so for many years, they continued to grapple with knowledge and understanding in different contexts. This was especially revealed in the *relationships with Indigenous Peoples* and *relationships with Indigenous Knowledges themes*. While some might express competency about engaging in particular relationships or about some aspects of Indigenous Knowledges, in general, participants were less likely to describe themselves as competent in their knowledge and understanding of Indigenous Peoples and consequently were less confident advocates and actors. As I listened to their stories, the influence of context became evident. Participants described situations in which they could do things that they believed they could do well in a specific context, could do less well in others, and would simply not attempt in others. The characteristics of these differed, but the interplay between competence, confidence and context was clear.

Throughout the conversations it was evident that participants were actively engaged in reflexivity. Their stories were peppered with observations and analyses of themselves in various contexts. They made specific references to the difficult, but necessary, observations that hooks (1990), DiAngelo (2011) and others have surfaced about the influence of race and privilege, and the challenges that people of privilege have in recognizing and negotiating their way through that privilege when engaging in social transformation work. Participants described encountering these challenges in the *clarifying purpose* and *self-reflections themes*, describing in many cases aspects of the specific actions that Sensoy and DiAngelo (2017) and Gehl (n.d.) offer to guide this reflexivity.

I had thought that the Johari Window might be a helpful tool in exploring how immigrant-descendant and immigrant faculty conceive of themselves as they contemplate engagement in the reconciliation work. Applying this framework, I could see the intersecting understandings of myself and the participant and what we know about one another in the context of our conversations and approximate a version of the Johari Window in each instance. While it was indeed helpful in considering my individual interaction with each person, I found it more difficult to apply this with confidence from the perspective of the participant. The obvious challenge was that in doing so I was basing the result on my assessment and assumptions about what the other person knows that I know about them. I could easily see the open pane of the window in our interactions and was pleasantly surprised sometimes when it was made larger by a revelation from the participant. In some cases, the blind pane seemed evident to me, as I sat with knowledge of that person that I assumed they did not know I possessed. Naturally, only the participant would know the true size of the hidden pane. While I could imagine how this framework might be helpful as a tool in encouraging reflexivity, I found it harder to extrapolate it to the larger context of how faculty members conceive of themselves as they approach engagement in reconciliation work. To do so would require a constellation of Johari Windows, none of which I could

claim to be accurate because the framework requires knowledge of the "deeper thoughts" that Ermine (2007) references for both parties.

The strong message from participants that it is critical for immigrant-descendants and immigrants to feel safe and supported as they expose their vulnerabilities in this work made me think of the poem by Micky ScottBey Jones (n.d.) that challenges the notion of safe spaces, contending instead that what we need are brave spaces. She writes:

> Together we will create *brave space*
>
> Because there is no such thing as a "safe space"
>
> We exist in the real world
>
> We all carry scars and we have all caused wounds.
>
> In this space
>
> We seek to turn down the volume of the outside world,
>
> We amplify voices that fight to be heard elsewhere,
>
> We call each other to more truth and love
>
> We have the right to start somewhere and continue to grow.
>
> We have the responsibility to examine what we think we know.
>
> We will not be perfect.
>
> This space will not be perfect.
>
> It will not always be what we wish it to be
>
> But
>
> It will be *our brave space together,*
>
> *and*
>
> *We will work on it side by side.*

This poem in turn raised the possibility that pursuing arts-based inquiry might offer one approach to engage around these topics, recalling the example that one participant shared about the well-attended and positively evaluated workshop that had been offered in previous years titled, "Walk with me: Responding to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's Calls to Action through participatory theatre ". McGregor's (2012) work on applying arts-informed pedagogy with educational leaders may provide insight in applying this approach as it aligns with practices that Freire (1970/2000), and Bishop (2015) advocate:

> The continual interplay of the performative (the actions taken) engagement with others (through dialogue), and the processes of enactment (self-reflexivity), are always in flux, situated within multiple discursive fields and inter-subjectively constructed. In this way the leader, like the artist, engages in a dynamic process of creative intention that is generative in its potential to affect others as well as him/herself. This process of understanding oneself as a transformational agent/leader artist is one that must therefore be nurtured and developed in leadership programming if we are to achieve the mandate of creating a more just and inclusive society. (McGregor, p. 311)

Robinson and Martin (2016) refer to this as "aesthetic action" (p. 2), describing this in the context of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's broad ranging inquiries:

> Aesthetic action is here conceived quite broadly to describe how a range of sensory stimuli—image, sound, and movement— have social and political effects through our affective engagements with them. In other words, we are concerned with the ways in which the TRC proceedings and artworks related to the Indian residential school system have impacts that are

> felt— whether this is through emotion or sensory experience— and to what degree these impacts result in change. (p.2)

In addition to encouraging participants to connect with ideas and feelings through creativity and play, the media that is central to an arts-based inquiry effectively mediates understanding and emotion. This approach lends itself to shifting the focus from the individual to the medium as ideas and emotions are surfaced and communicated allowing the individual some space between their vulnerabilities and the creation that can be variously interpreted. Poitras Pratt and Lalonde (2018a) have also used arts-informed pedagogy with educational leaders in the context of education and note that, "with the right navigator leading the way, content knowledge shifts to complex understandings, and possibilities for reconciling Indigenous and non-Indigenous relations open up" (p. 4).

These expressions of praxis provide some insight into participants' actions and reflections along the continuum of engagement Child (2018) identified and the ongoing development of ally work. They also suggest that, as ScottBey-Jones offers, perhaps we have to imagine brave spaces, not safe spaces, spaces that are characterized by thoughtfulness and practices that will also make them ethical spaces.

Experiencing Methodology and Method

As I noted in Chapter One, I approached this research from an emerging understanding of my ontological stance as a relativist aligned with the interpretive paradigm and working in the epistemological perspective of constructivism. The exercise of conducting this research exposed for me that while I believe in relativism and see myself as a relativist, practising constructivist approaches in the interpretive paradigm to understand myself and the world around me, I am more drawn to positivist approaches than my declared orientation might suggest. A tension emerged between the pragmatic orientation I have previously professed and the seeming limitations of qualitative research methodologies to afford generally applicable results.

The conversations with individual participants were perhaps easier for me because they were all researchers themselves, and also more challenging for this same reason. As people who regularly engage in research activity, all of whom have significant experience with qualitative research methods, participants were familiar with the research context and process. This made *preparing the space* and *assembling* easier, two of the things that need to be done in the ceremony of research that Wilson talked about and to which I referred in Chapter One (S. Wilson, personal communication, January 20, 2020). The participants were prepared for the protocols of research ethics boards and were familiar with the introductory reviews of these in each setting and the recording of our interactions. They had worked with narrative approaches and they knew better than I did what our interaction might be like. These same conditions made it challenging for me as I was very aware that I was a neophyte in comparison. I did not feel that any one of them would judge me but felt rather that I might let them down.

I had elected to employ an anti-oppressive research methodology, with a narrative approach inspired by Fraser and Jaldorn (2015), with the voices of Indigenous scholars like Kovach (2009), Stewart (2007, 2008, 2009) and Wilson (2008) reminding me that there was tremendous value in stories and conversation. Nevertheless, in the first few conversations I found myself sneaking glances at the set of questions that I had been required to submit as the conversation guide in my research ethics applications. Even though I had deliberately chosen not to do it, I worried that I wasn't asking them all the same questions and therefore the resulting data would be confounded and I would have wasted their time by producing nothing coherent to share. My positivist past sought to control the variables to reduce the influence of the research activity, including me, on the results. I wondered if I was missing something in the act of *engaging in ritual* that Wilson (S. Wilson, personal communication, January 20, 2020) had described by not speaking the same words in the same order with each participant. This was

exacerbated when the lockdown was ordered by the British Columbia Public Health Office on March 17, 2020 and I could no longer hold conversations where the participant and shared physical space.

It only took a few conversations for me to realize that the results were far richer than they would have been had I stuck to that initial list. Furthermore, with more reflection and reading, I came to embrace that the results were indeed confounded, and that this was essential to establishing meaning in a constructivist approach based in interpretivism. While I had previously understood this intellectually, it was now also my experience. Recalling Clandinin and Connelly (2000), I found a comfortable place "always in the midst, located somewhere along the dimensions of time, place, the personal and the social…in the middle of a nested set of stories – ours and theirs" (p. 63).

Instead of seeing the ceremony of research as speaking the same words each time, as in the faith I grew up in, I focused instead on thinking about the acts of meeting, greeting, thanking, opening, listening, asking, reflecting, thanking again and parting. When we were forced to move to a web conferencing tool to conduct our conversations, I worried that this too might impact the regularity of the ritual. Respecting that, going into our conversations, my relationship with each participant was unique and that it was changed as each ended, I soon established the rhythm of these meetings and caught myself only a few times having missed something that had become part of the ceremony. Further, as noted in Chapter Three, in only one conversation did the use of the web conferencing tool have an apparent impact on the experience for the participant and me as we turned off the video feed to improve internet connectivity. Although this resulted in a very different feel to the conversation at the time, when I approached the meaning making, it did not stand out differently from the rest. I did not observe any significant difference in the quality or quantity of the exchanges we shared that might not otherwise be explained by the nature of our pre-existing relationship.

I was aware from the outset that working with participants with whom I had pre-existing relationships would impact the results and that it would be necessary for me to be aware of biases I might bring to our conversations or to the process of drawing meaning from them. Notwithstanding this, as I began the first few conversations it felt as if there were too few controls in place, again revealing a deeper rooted tendency to positivism. Although I had read and appreciated a wide range of scholarly works exploring the inherent impact of relationship between researchers and participants, I was concerned that because I had pre-existing relationships with every participant, ranging from workplace acquaintances to close colleagues and friends, our conversations might not be comparable and that the results would be too different to be useful. I was conscious of how my relationship with each participant impacted the first couple of conversations, but as time went on, I began to see that in every case my pre-existing relationship with the participant was in fact, helpful. I experienced deep humility and gratitude that each person was willing to give of their time and to share their insights in open, frank and sometimes emotionally difficult moments. While I by no means could say that I understood them, or that I knew exactly what they were thinking, there came to be a sense of being *with* one another. Rather than confounding the results, this gave me the impression that the connections that were made in the conversations were real and apparent. While I remained conscious of my place in this and the influence that my own words and behaviours might have on theirs, I gained confidence that the conversations were revealing participants' thoughts and observations that were true to them in that moment. I began to let go of this worry. The concept of relational accountability that Wilson (2008) emphasizes in the Indigenist research paradigm became more important. In each conversation, I was reminded of the gifts that each participant was sharing with me and that I needed to do my best to honour those gifts. This motivated me to take care with their words and the results of our conversations, to be patient with the process and give it its due and to carry on, even when the weight of continuing this work during a global pandemic seemed heavy to bear. This relational accountability spurred me to follow up with participants

who posed questions for which I had further information or resources to share. This is something that I otherwise would not have done, fearing that this was crossing the boundary of researcher and colleague. In the spirit of relational accountability, these actions seemed to me to be part of *living the congruent lifestyle* that Wilson (S. Wilson, personal communication, February 2, 2020) encourages researchers to do as they approach research as ceremony. This research focused on understanding how faculty members conceive of themselves as they approach reconciliation work with the purpose of supporting them in doing so, and thus supporting them in doing so was congruent with this objective. At the same time, the entire experience of engaging in these ceremonies with the participants, from the invitations to the notes of thanks and our ongoing conversations, has again reinforced my conviction that relationships are fundamental to experiencing the world.

After having completed the individual conversations with the participants, I turned to the process of meaning making as described in Chapter Three. While I could clearly see themes emerge, there was a nagging voice in my head that constantly questioned whether doing this intuitively was good enough. After reading through the transcripts a few times, I could resist no longer, and created a spreadsheet to frame a quantitative approach to counting phrases and words that appeared. I spent some time on this, working through several of the transcripts, but was now plagued by the sense that I was betraying the methodology I had chosen. I took some solace in the argument that critical theory, feminist theory and anti-oppressive research and narrative approaches all invite the researcher to adapt as the research progresses. That said, I realized that I was not adapting to the research, but rather to my own sense of what represented rigour.

I realised more and more the benefit of considering relationship as central to understanding what Wilson (2008) emphasizes in his Indigenist research paradigm, and what Kovach (2009), Stewart (2007, 2008, 2009) and other Indigenous scholars recognize. I spent a good deal of time contemplating

and discussing my relationship to the concepts of reliability and validity through the process of making meaning that the anti-oppressive research approach invites (Potts & Brown, 2015). I ruminated about what bothered me so much about letting the voices speak to me as meanings in context rather than validating my observations with some method that would give concrete evidence that I was on the right track. It became clear that I was struggling with a latent positivist ontological perspective rooted perhaps in both my personality and in my education and inculcation in the dominant culture. Regarding reliability, the expectation that a replication of the same research would produce the same, or at least very similar results (Payne & Payne, 2004), I was concerned that if I was to return to these same data after some time, I would perhaps find different meanings. Regarding validity, the expectation that the research is actually measuring what it is intended to measure (Payne & Payne, 2004), I worried that notwithstanding that I had ostensibly accepted that it was a good thing to let the research emerge in spite of the research question, I might be taking different meaning from the conversations than the participants would see themselves.

This internal debate reconnected me to an article I had read in my first graduate course that suggested that educational research can contribute most where:

> Instead of claiming to provide truths, educational researchers can provide useful empirical heuristics. I define empirical heuristics as models of relationships between factors based on empirical evidence, but without a claim to universality. Their value is not infallible prediction, but the ability to aid human inquiry and contribute to reflective practice (St. Clair, 2005, p.436).

St. Clair defines heuristics as: “a model of an educational process that provides useful insights without necessarily capturing every possible detail of the interaction” (p.448). Although St. Clair (2005) does not define the word empirical, I understand its meaning in this context to reflect:

> …direct experience or observation of the world. To say that a question is an empirical question is to say that we will answer it – or try to answer it – by obtaining direct, observable information from the world, rather than, for example, by theorizing, or by reasoning, or by arguing from first principles. (Punch, 2008, p. 2)

Casting back to my concerns about generalizability, this position reminded me that notwithstanding the limitations and potential biases of this research, the results may point to empirical heuristics that can contribute to supporting immigrant-descendant and immigrant faculty as they engage in reconciliation work. Thus, I eventually resolved that whatever I might draw from the results of the conversations did not need to be derived from a controlled, rigid approach, maximizing the potential for similarity to other contexts that allow for generalizations to be made. Rather, my direct experience of the conversations, and my autoethnographic observations, provided empirical data that confirmed that the framework that revealed itself to me through the process could be eventually be shared as an empirical heuristic.

I found significant relief in the process of member checking, both the feedback I received from each participant and the group conversation. None of the participants made any suggestions for changes to the themes that I had identified in each of our conversations, though several did change wording in the summaries I had made and the quotations I had extracted as demonstrative of key points. Each participant provided written confirmation that they agreed that the summaries reflected their stories and the themes they had shared. Approaching the group conversation, I had some doubt about the degree to which participants would see the themes coming together, particularly as not every conversation included every theme. I was pleasantly surprised to hear participants' unanimously positive responses to the combined themes and their additional comments that expanded on a few that sparked more discussion. There was general consensus that these themes and the key points I had shared for each were representative of their individual experiences or of their observations of the

experiences of their peers. Although I am very sure that there is likely much more richness in the conversations that remains to be discovered, this gave me assurance that even though I did not count words and phrases, the process of allowing the meaning to surface in each conversation had worked, at least as determined by the participants themselves. This resonated with the assertion that Clandinin and Connelly (2000) had made that narratives are not individual narratives, but community narratives. In our small university community, these conversations have become part of our community narrative.

My examination of the conversations with participants through the various lenses that the theories and works of scholarship and practice that I reviewed in advance of this research triggered much thought about social transformation generally, and the place of faculty in advancing reconciliation work post-secondary institutions specifically. As Clandinin and Connelly (2000) had suggested in their overview of narrative inquiry, I came to appreciate the three-dimensional space that resulted from the combination of the three axes of time, personal/social and place, illuminated by the works of the scholars and practitioners who I had previously studied. It was apparent to me that the conversations, method and ceremony of the research were praxis, contributing to social transformation. The pre-eminence of the influence and importance of relationships was underscored, with new appreciation for relationships not just with people, but with ideas. I experienced critical reflexivity in a natural setting, being made directly "…aware in the moment of what is influencing the researcher's internal and external responses while simultaneously being aware of the researcher's relationship to the research topic and the participants" (Dowling, 2006, p. 8). Reflecting on the totality of these observations, it was clear to me that there is much that can be drawn upon in theory and practice to inform supporting immigrant-descendant and immigrant faculty members as they engage in reconciliation work. I was also inspired to present a heuristic, sharing an idea that came to me to and provide a framework for supporting these faculty in this context.

Observations of Autoethnography

Exploring Personal Transformation

The autoethnographic exercise of observing myself through the process of this research resulted in "aha moments" that revealed the influence of the dominant culture in my worldview and assumptions. Considering that autoethnography, as a form of personal critical reflexivity (Dowling, 2006), is intended to surface "… multiple layers of consciousness, connecting the personal to the cultural" (Ellis & Bochner, 2000, p.739), I did not expect to find many instances where culture was the defining feature, largely because all but one of the participants was either an immigrant-descendant or immigrants from countries that would be described as sharing the Western cultural orientation that Kovach (2009) defined as "…a particular ontological, epistemological, sociological and ideological way of thinking and being as differentiated from Eastern or Indigenous worldview, and so forth" (p. 21). I was again surprised. Although these observations did spark a good deal of thought it turned out that there were indeed times when I could see where culture impacted my understanding, made evident in contrast to the understanding of someone whose cultural experiences were different from mine. My experience of approaching tasks linearly, understanding of what it means to be in relationship with ideas, making meaning of the world and engaging in dominant structures for discourse and deepening empathy for the oppressed were all exposed by absorbing understanding of another way of knowing or being. Some of these came, perhaps not surprisingly, from my conversations with immigrant participants who were open about the differences in culture that they experience coming to Canada, even after having lived in these lands for many years. These were less likely to be related to the research, more often illuminating how our respective cultural backgrounds influence our views of contexts and relationships in general. Of the many autoethnographic observations that I made, I however only presented a few in Chapter Four, chosen for their relevance to this work. Each of these represented a good amount of intellectual and emotion energy and each had significant impact on my

worldview. As a result of these observations, and others that were not shared in Chapter Four, the simple but profound outcome for me was humility.

Prior to this research I would have described myself as having a relatively well-developed sense of self-awareness, if only because I have lived for more than five decades and had many opportunities to be made aware of who I was, who I am, and who I am becoming. Approaching this research with the expectation that I would supplement my observations of others with observations of myself, I did not anticipate that the moments where I saw new understanding crystalize would reveal a deeper level of meaning. I certainly expected to learn new things, but I did not expect that they would also shift from intellectualizing to absorbing. In all cases, along with the "aha moment" I experienced a sense of settling in with the new realization, an emotional connection to really "getting it". My next reactions were gratitude for the newfound understanding and then humility, the reminder that I still have so very much to learn and perhaps am not so self-aware as I might like to think. I was often left with a lingering sense of caution in the hours and days that followed, warning myself against certainty and framing more of my thinking as inquiry.

This observation was a reminder that, by failing to grasp the deeper meanings that are clouded by dominant cultural experiences, I risked perpetuating systemic oppression. Even when I think I am aware of my biases, I may not be. Even when I think I am doing the right thing, I may not be. I come away from this research with a greater appreciation for conceiving of myself as a work in progress, practising critical reflexivity, and offering kindness to others and to myself in our ongoing becoming.

Experiencing Methodology and Method

While pausing to reflect has been a practice that I have learned to appreciate, recording the results of my reflections comes less easily to me. Writing what I was thinking at the time that it occurred to me required a discipline that I have yet to master. As the research process progressed and I

began to have epiphanies that connected directly to the research and thereby to my daily work and life, I found myself eager to record what I was thinking. I did not always do this right away, sometimes because they came at times that were not conducive to doing so. Perhaps not surprisingly, some of the best insights came to me at times when I was not focused on the work but doing something completely disconnected, like walking my dog in the forest, or taking a bath. In keeping with allowing the research to determine the method, I began to include these reflections. The resulting collection is not voluminous, and I have only included a selection of these in this dissertation, but it represents a good deal of learning that I shall carry with me in the years to come.

The greatest challenge I experienced in the practice of autoethnography was sorting through self-reflections that were not related to the influence of culture. Although these were sometimes noisy competitors with my truly autoethnographic observations, the self-reflections that I made through the research process and the writing of this dissertation have had significant impact and I am as much or more grateful for the learning I have gained about myself as I am for what I learned about my research topic.

Gathering Around the Fire

Reflecting on the research findings not only surfaced observations of theory and methodology in practice. Contemplating the fullness of the conversations and my autoethnographic observations, a framework emerged for conceptualizing how immigrant-descendants and immigrants are positioned as they consider engagement in reconciliation work. The results of this research are not generalizable to other contexts, but this perhaps offers an empirical heuristic to aid inquiry and reflection.

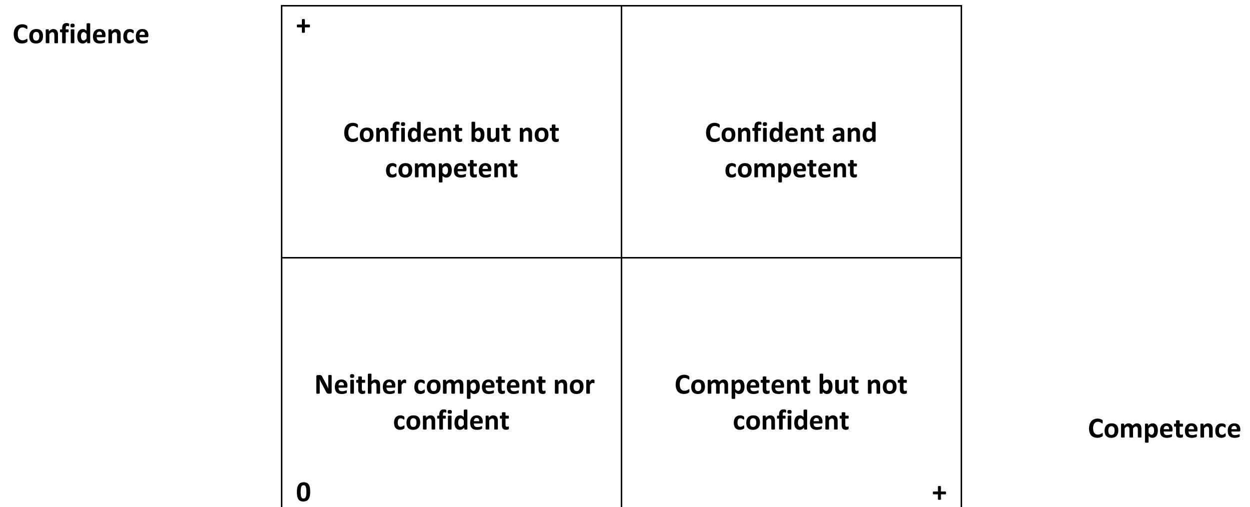
The Johari Window (Luft & Ingram, 1955) is modeled on a common practice in the dominant culture that uses a graphic representation of the relationship between two conditions by labelling the

vertical and horizontal axes with each of those conditions, and naming the four quadrants that result from bisecting each of these. United States President Dwight D. Eisenhower is credited with the first popular use of this matrix, based on a quote that is attributed to him that he drew from something he learned from an anonymous former college president. In a speech to the Second Assembly of the World Council of Churches, on August 19, 1954, Eisenhower quoted the former college president as saying, "I have two kinds of problems, the urgent and the important. The urgent are not important, and the important are never urgent" (Eisenhower, 1954). The two conditions of importance and urgency, applied to determine which problems or actions to complete first, provide insight into both what needs to be done now and how we can shift our behaviour to focus most on important but not urgent things in our lives.

Two overarching themes that had become evident in my conversations with participants seemed to make some sense using this model: competence and confidence. It occurred to me that I could see a similar matrix based on these conditions, with one axis representing the competence that immigrant-descendants and immigrants expressed having as they join a circle surrounding a specific action related to reconciliation work, and the other representing the confidence that they have in undertaking that action. Considering these axes as continua, this approach draws from Child's (2018) notion of placing oneself along a continuum of engagement. The points Child identified in his continuum of engagement, marked by awareness, knowledge, understanding and advocacy/action, might form a basis for the criteria that an individual would use in assessing where they see themselves along the continua of competence and confidence. Such self-assessment might be rooted in experience and emotion and thus be different for every individual. The practice of placing oneself in this framework could only be articulated by the individual and would not need to be rational. The only thing that matters is where we see ourselves.

Figure 3

Competence and Confidence Self-location Framework



It bears noting that, like the concepts of importance and urgency in the Eisenhower matrix, our self-assessments of confidence and competence are not mutually exclusive. We are more likely to be confident if we believe we are competent, and more likely to build competence when we feel confidence. Nevertheless, these two concepts were distinguished by participants in their own words, leading me to assert that one can identify these as sufficiently separate concepts. In this context, confidence was revealed as the *belief* that a participant had in their ability to do something well, while competence was the actual *ability* to do something well. Participants sometimes saw themselves as being able to do things that would advance reconciliation, but at the same time did not necessarily believe that they would be successful in doing these things.

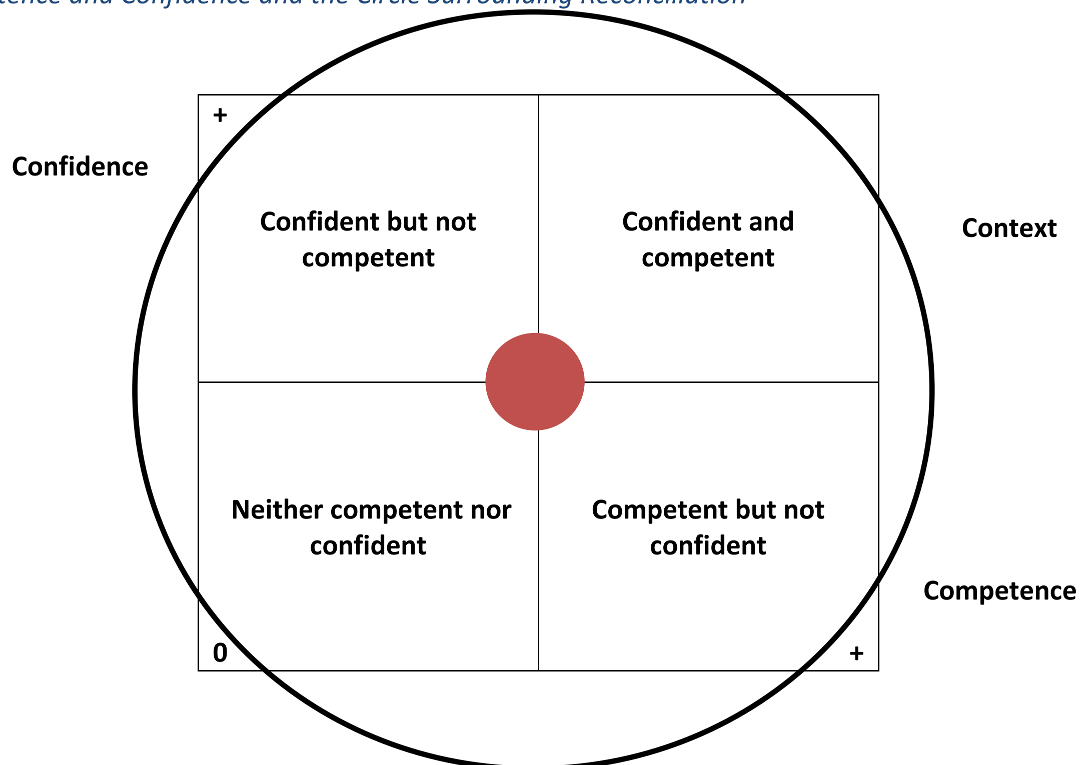
The simplicity and clarity of this matrix appealed to me a great deal but applying this to the conversations I had with participants or considering where I would situate myself in this matrix was not so easy. Although I could think of a few participants who through their statements seemingly consistently positioned themselves clearly in one of these quadrants, there was variability in the degree

to which they expressed confidence or competence based on the action that was described and the context in which it occurred.

Noting that participants might locate themselves in different places in the matrix depending on action in context, it occurred to me that if I superimposed a circle onto the matrix it could represent the context in which the action, or reconciliation work, at the centre was taking place. Instead of one circle to describe all reconciliation work, this addition underscores the importance of context in considering where one might see oneself in the circle, encouraging reflection on where we see ourselves in relationship to many potential factors that impact our self-assessed competence and confidence. Factors that affect our experience might include our relationship to the people present, to the ideas we are working with, to the place we are located and the like. Placing a red infilled circle in the centre to represent reconciliation work and a circle to symbolize context, Figure 4 illustrates this relationship.

Figure 4

Competence and Confidence and the Circle Surrounding Reconciliation



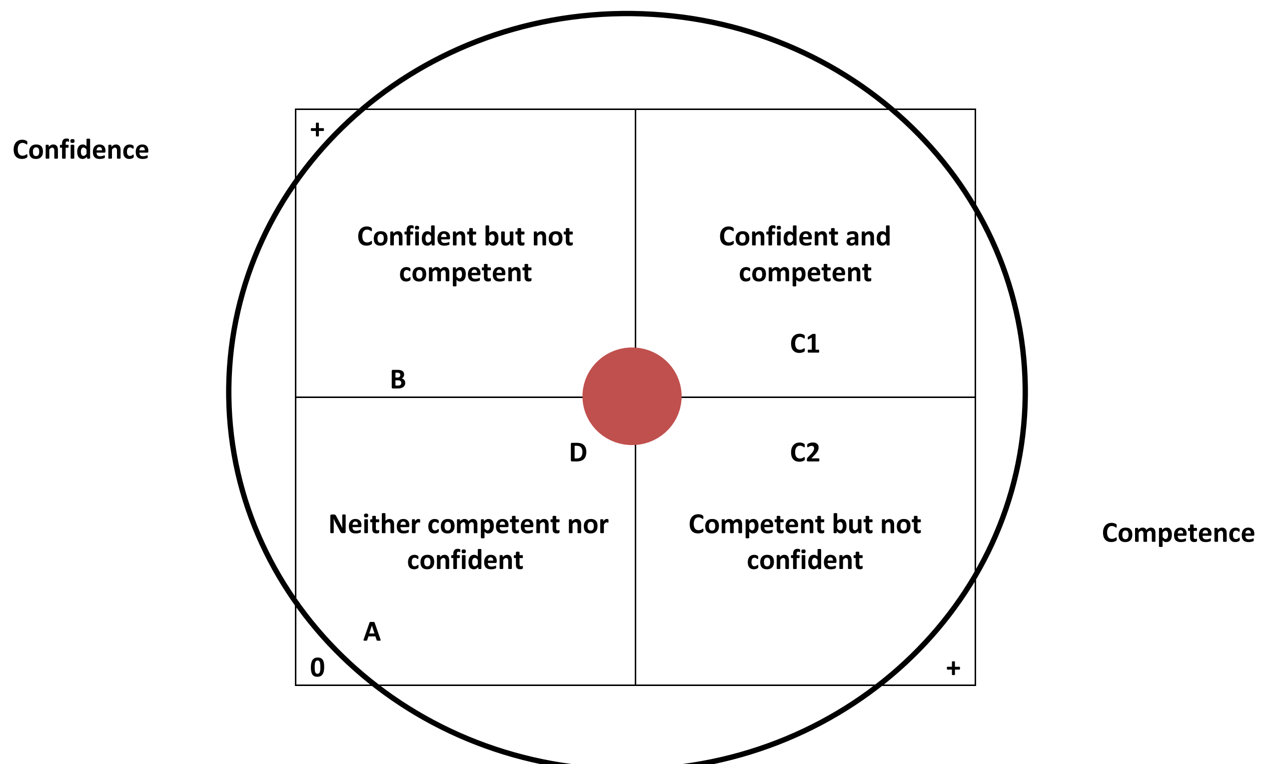
It also occurred to me that my sense of confidence or competence related to action might grow or diminish over time and that I might move to a different zone in the matrix. As Freire (1970/2000), Bishop (2015) and others suggest, there is an ongoing process of action and reflection that is required of individuals who aspire to join in social transformation. Recalling the example of land acknowledgements that participants had raised in several conversations, I could see how this was reflected my own experience. When Asma-na-hi Antoine (Toquaht) joined Royal Roads University as Indigenous Education and Student Services Manager in 2014, she advocated that land acknowledgements be made as a “small sign of reconciliation”. In the beginning, land acknowledgements were conducted at only at large community gatherings, almost always by Asma-na-hi, or at meetings she chaired. As she worked to awaken the role of immigrant-descendants and immigrants in this as reconciliation work, Asma-na-hi encouraged others to make the land acknowledgement, providing resources such as recommended text and a PowerPoint slide that included photographs of the late Chief Andy Thomas of Esquimalt Nation, at that time both elected and hereditary Chief of the Esquimalt Nation, and Chief Ron Sam, elected Chief of the Songhees Nation. The PowerPoint slide included an audio recording that users could play that featured Chief Ron Sam speaking, welcoming Royal Roads students, employees, and visitors to the traditional lands of the ancestors and families of these Nations.

When I was first asked to give a land acknowledgement at a meeting or event at Royal Roads University where I work, I would have located myself in the bottom left quadrant, assessing myself in relation to this action as neither confident, nor competent. I would read the text on the slide verbatim, or simply make a reference to acknowledging the lands and play the audio recording on the PowerPoint slide. I recall feeling very nervous, my face flushed and my voice became higher. With a little experience, moving from reading to memorizing the right words, I became more confident. I experienced fewer symptoms of distress as I approached speaking them and I found myself more and

more willing to offer to do so. Thus, I could see how I moved clockwise to the upper left quadrant. As time went on, I began to see how I could perform this small act of reconciliation more meaningfully, and I began to personalize my land acknowledgements, becoming confident that I can pronounce the names of our host nations and make increasingly more meaningful connections between the peoples of these lands and the work that we are gathered to do, moving further clockwise to the upper right quadrant. Over time, this increasing competence and confidence was observed by others as I noted that I was more often asked to stand in for Asma-na-hi or to provide guidance to others in advance of an event where they were expected to provide a land acknowledgement. The progression towards competence and confidence was much like the helix that Bishop (2015) imagines as we act and reflect and act again in praxis, but sometimes circled back upon itself. I experienced times when I felt competent and confident and times when I lacked both of these conditions. Putting this together, Figure 5 illustrates the three positions I have described above as A, B, and C1/C2, respectively.

Figure 5

Competence and Confidence and Making Land Acknowledgements



Point C1 might represent where I would position myself on these axes in the context of making a land acknowledgement in meeting of my peers on the campus of Royal Roads University where I have positive working relationships with the people and am familiar with the names of our host Nations and their Chiefs. Point C2 might represent where I would position myself on these axes in the context of making a land acknowledgement at a more formal event attended by a wide range of people, including members of our Heron People Circle, the Old Ones/Elders who advise the university. In this example I have a range of relationships with the people who might be present. In settings where members of our Heron People Circle are present, I know that I am more likely to be worried about honouring them appropriately as a sign of the respect I hold for each of them. Point D in Figure 5 might then represent conducting a land acknowledgement at a conference where I might be presenting a paper where I know few of the attendees, Indigenous scholars, professionals and/or Old Ones/Elders might be present and I am unfamiliar with the traditional lands and host Nations.

When I reflected on this and considering other scenarios where I had joined a circle surrounding an action that might be considered reconciliation work, the fundamental influence of relationship again became evident to me. It is not only that I might gain or lose competence or confidence over time, but that as St. Clair (2005) points out, though my experiences might be similar, there remain unknowns that make extrapolation from one experience to the next much less certain. In the example of the land acknowledgement, the dynamics of ascribed and earned power and the sense of relational accountability I expressed towards the Heron People Circle members are clear, but these are known only to me. At the same time, I can see the influence that my relationship with Indigenous Knowledges has on my sense of confidence and competence and the accountability that I feel towards the words and their meaning is manifest. This seemed to me to embody the relationality that Wilson (2008) describes as "…an epistemology where the relationship with something (a person, object or idea) is more

important than the thing itself" (p. 73). This resonates with Kovach's (2009) summary of the Indigenous worldview as described in Chapter Three, wherein she emphasizes the importance of relationality and thus the necessity of a holistic perspective. Although I may be an individual at the centre for Bronfenbrenner's ecosystem of human development, or reflect on myself through the Johari Window, this again reinforces that understanding self in context requires more complex inquiry.

I was talking with my friend and colleague Russ Johnston (Neyaashiinigmiing) about Bronfenbrenner's ecosystem of human development and how I was applying it in this work and the competence-confidence framework I have proposed. Later that evening, Russ phoned me and shared that the teachings of his ancestors suggest other ways of conceiving of who and where we are in this world. He made many points that have stayed with me, but I wanted to make note of two that I think are important to include in my dissertation.

His first observation was about the concept of time. Rather than the one-way progression of time from past to present to future that we understand in the dominant culture and that Bronfenbrenner's chronosystem implies, Russ explained that time is not linear in the ontology of his ancestors. Time is fluid and can be experienced by moving forward, back and in the present. The only certainty is change, he said, and the cyclical nature of all things – birth, growth, death and renewal. This made me wonder if Bishop's idea of a helix that infers ongoing progression "upwards" as one develops in becoming an ally might be better considered as myriad progressions that may loop back, jump forward or remain static.

Russ also shared that the Medicine Wheel that is part of his cultural teachings is often presented in two dimensions, much as I have drawn the framework here, but that it is understood in three dimensions. Reflecting on the framework that I have proposed, he added that the Medicine Wheel allows you to be in all of the points as a living being. This left me with the image of myself as the constellation of points that represent how I see myself in terms of competence and confidence having joined circles of action in the past. It therefore seemed natural that I could not, and should not, consider placing myself in any one location in the larger circle surrounding reconciliation, returning instead to a holistic picture of myself as many points in a three-dimensional space. Perhaps all I need to know about myself in this greater circle is that I am there.

Summary

As I thought about this evolving framework, I was reminded of the image that had often come to me through the research process: an image of people seated around a fire. Likely sparked by Newman's

metaphor of the circle surrounding reconciliation, I was drawn to this image and the connotations it held for me in my dominant cultural experience. Notwithstanding that the word fire, without the context of people encircling it, might evoke negative connotations of danger and destruction, the connotations that fire in this context held for me were positive: family, friendship, community, warmth, safety, and beauty. I had a photograph of a campfire that I had taken during the summer of 2020 that I had included in my autoethnographic observations, but I had not made sense of why it seemed relevant.

I had been reading some of the works of the late Richard Wagamese (Ojibway) during this time and his observation that gathering around fire is part of our common human experience. He writes,

> In the primitive times that were our common beginning, we were wanderers. All of us. Every contemporary culture shares this origin. We followed game and other food. We foraged to survive. Every night, fires were lit and everyone gathered around them. Everyone sat and basked in the flickering light of the flames and the first thing that fire engendered in them was feeling. (Wagamese, 2019, p. 16)

Figure 6

Photograph of a campfire

The relevance of the image of the campfire suddenly became clear. In each action of reconciliation work, we join others around that fire at the centre. How confident and competent we feel as we join a circle and engage in action may influence where we sit in that circle, and while the links between us may not create a circular shape, we are nevertheless together. While I continue to hold on to Newman's (2017) notion of a diverse community of Indigenous Peoples, immigrant-descendants and immigrants joining the circle around reconciliation, perhaps on the journey towards reconciliation that the Truth and Reconciliation Report describes (2015), there are many fires around which we can gather.

Chapter Six: Continuing the Journey

As I move away from this fire to join other circles in the journey towards reconciliation, I reflect in this chapter on what I will carry with me as I go, *incorporating it into my lifestyle* as Wilson (S. Wilson, personal communication, February 2, 2020) suggests culminates a ceremony of research. I know that no matter how far I move from this fire, it will always burn with glowing coals in my heart and mind, alighting perhaps from time to time and forever a source of warmth and beauty. It has illuminated for me not only the experience of post-secondary faculty members as they approach reconciliation work, but my awareness, knowledge, understanding and advocacy/action in this and in so many other aspects of my life. I return to the questions I posed for myself in Chapter One, presented in reverse order here, to frame these concluding reflections.

How did I Explore Faculty Experiences?

Coming to this Circle

It was important to me to begin by situating who I am and to articulate why walking in new way forward with Indigenous Peoples is so important as I sought to do in Chapter One. In Chapter Two, the overview of how ethical spaces of engagement (Ermine, 2007) can be created in the context of the circle surrounding reconciliation (Newman 2017) followed the evolution of my understanding of the inherent tensions and some of the ways in which they can be mitigated so that true dialogue can occur. Through the mess-finding (Potts & Brown, 2015) that this indulged, it became clear to me that Indigenous Peoples, immigrant-descendants, and immigrants living in this land we now call Canada are all called to join the circle surrounding reconciliation. While that circle needs us all, this exploration confirmed for me that there is work that we as immigrant-descendants and immigrants can do on our own, ever connected to the larger circle, to break down our mental cages so we can be better together in walking in a new way forward. Chapter Three considered methodology, rooted in an emerging understanding of my ontological stance as relativist and a tendency towards the epistemological perspective of

constructivism, aligning with the interpretive paradigm. It explored how this might be manifested through qualitative methodology and method, settling on the anti-oppressive research approach (Potts & Brown, 2015) informed by the Indigenist research paradigm (Wilson, 2008) and considering narrative inquiry through lenses of the dominant culture and Indigenous researchers. This chapter also provided a summary of the research activities, individual conversations held with 15 participants, a group conversation with eight that followed the member checking of the individual conversations, and autoethnographic observations. Chapter Four presented the results of my making meaning of these activities, offering nine themes that emerged through that reflection: *locating self*, *clarifying purpose*, *institutional challenges*, *relationships with Indigenous Peoples*, *relationships with Indigenous Knowledges, curriculum*, *teaching*, *self-reflections* and *what might help*. Five significant autoethnographic observations were highlighted in Chapter Four, opening up new ways of seeing the world by experiencing the contrast between my dominant cultural context and a nascent understanding of Indigenous cultures. Chapter Five sought to apply these meanings to theory and scholarship that had been explored in the mess-finding stage of coming to the research summarized in Chapter Two and the experience of methodology and method through these same lenses that was the focus of Chapter Three. In this summative and final chapter, I circle back to my purpose and intention in undertaking this research, identify some of its limitations, suggest recommendations for future action and research and reflect on the impact that all of this has had on me personally and professionally.

Only Around this Fire

The results of this research are confounded by a number of variables and thus they are not generalizable beyond the point in time and space that they were generated, notwithstanding that they may offer an empirical heuristic to guide insight and reflection in other contexts.

The most obvious limitation to these results is me. They are a product of my behaviour and thinking and thus limited by my ability, knowledge, skills, and the execution of these. As so many contemporary researchers have pointed out, the very act of engaging with others in any process of inquiry implicates the researcher themselves in the results (Brinkman et al., 2014; Burns & Chantler, 2011; Clandinin & Connelly, 1994; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). My participation in this work inherently includes my biases, known, hidden and unknown as the Johari Window (Luft & Ingram, 1955) invites me to consider. The exercise of inviting autoethnographic observations throughout the research process made this patently evident.

I was very aware of checking preconceived opinions or judgments I might have I worked through all aspects of the study, but I admit to being frequently surprised that I had more of these than I might have believed or hoped. In the process of making meaning of the conversations I had with participants I may have missed important meanings that did not reveal themselves to me at the time and remain lost to this work, or at least from me for now. This may be more likely because I relied on keeping the words together with the non-verbal setting of each conversation, asking for meaning to emerge, rather than taking the traditional content analysis approach that counts specific words and phrases to verify the presence and prevalence of meanings. Having identified themes as I moved through the conversations in this meaning making process, I may have been biased towards confirming ideas that were raised earlier in the process than being open to new ideas that might have come later.

The context in which the research occurred introduces limitations. Restricting the sample to faculty of one institution helped to provide a similar context for the work with which these faculty members have been and will continue to be engaged. The specific characteristics of Royal Roads University introduce limitations however. As noted in Chapter One, Royal Roads has a unique mandate in the lands we now call British Columbia, Canada to provide applied and professional programming.

Most programs are offered at the graduate level and are delivered by combining short-term intensive on-campus residencies with longer periods of online coursework. As a result, the average student age at time of writing was 37 (Royal Roads University, 2021) and therefore students are more likely to bring more life experience to learning environments that would normally be the case. There are no Indigenous full-time regular faculty members employed by the University and only three Indigenous employees whose roles are related to supporting Indigeneity in the institution, and only one of which is focused on Indigenous education. These factors might reasonably have a direct impact on faculty experiences of developing curriculum and teaching that would not be borne out at another institution.

The potential for response bias must also be recognized. The participants all volunteered, and all had experiences with developing curriculum and teaching that were related to reconciliation work. While I am confident that the meanings were reflective of these participants, they clearly should not be extrapolated to those who did not participate. These participants all expressed motivation to engage in reconciliation work and it is possible that there are those who do not share this orientation. It is possible that similar conversations with a different group of faculty members might reveal that they are equally motivated, and such conversations might or might not result in similar themes.

Recognizing that I am a colleague of the participants had both advantages and limitations. My work with faculty in a positive, collegial university community context helped me to build trust with participants and to elicit greater depth in the interview process. This closeness can also be a limitation, however as there may have been times that individuals were less likely to want to share vulnerabilities with me. This may have been somewhat mitigated by the fact that there is no ascribed power dynamic in my relationship with faculty as they do not report to me in any way – rather, the services my portfolio offers them are supports for their work.

What Have I Contributed?

This research was intended to explore how immigrant-descendant and immigrant faculty think about themselves as they are called to action by the Calls to Action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (2015b). The purpose of doing this was to seek insight into their experiences to inform how we might support immigrant-descendant and immigrant faculty walking forward in a good way with Indigenous Peoples as we engage together in reconciliation work by better understanding their self-conceptions. The ultimate goal of all of this is to reach the top of the mountain that Chair of the Truth and Reconciliation Justice Murray Sinclair referred to in his speech at the release of the Commission's Report (Macleans, 2015), one day achieving reconciliation as the Report defines it. I restate my research question here for ease of reference:

> How do immigrant-descendant and immigrant faculty conceive of themselves as they contemplate engagement in the consciousness-raising, ally work and institutional change that are required as we walk in a new way with Indigenous Peoples?

Aligned with my relativist ontological stance and the epistemological perspective of constructivism and interpretive paradigm, I undertook to explore this question using qualitative methodology. I committed to an anti-oppressive research approach (Potts & Brown, 2015) and to the Indigenist research paradigm (Wilson, 2008) in settling on method. The research intentionally focused on the experiences of a small group of faculty members with whom I had pre-existing relationships as a result of our work as colleagues employed at Royal Roads University, appreciating at the outset that its results would not be generalizable beyond the time and place in which they were generated. The conversations we had could never be replicated. That said, I believe that this work provides an empirical heuristic (St. Clair, 2005) that can offer insight into understanding the experiences of immigrant-descendant and immigrant faculty in other times and places.

Learning from Circles of the Past

As noted in the previous chapter, this research resulted in some insights into how immigrant-descendant and immigrant faculty members conceive of themselves but as the stories they told in our conversations unfolded so much more was revealed. Of the nine themes that emerged from the individual and group conversations, two focused most on how they conceive of themselves, *locating self* and *self-reflections*. Acknowledging that none of these themes is mutually exclusive, the remaining seven themes of *clarifying purpose*, *institutional challenges*, *relationships with Indigenous Peoples*, *relationships with Indigenous Knowledges, curriculum*, *teaching*, and *what might help* addressed purpose, process and suggestions for future advocacy and action. These themes were generated from key points that surfaced in stories told in the context of participants' experiences reinforcing two overarching conditions, competence and confidence.

During the entirety of this research I had found only one publication that recounted experiences of two immigrant-descendant scholars in what they termed "Indigenization initiatives" at their home institution (Pardy & Pardy, 2020, p. 231), discovered as I was well into writing about the meanings that had emerged from the conversations. Although that publication reinforced the position that I have taken there is a place for immigrant-descendants in reconciliation work and that the journey will be long, it did not offer clear points of comparison to this work, and thus I am left without a body of literature on this specific topic against which to directly compare the similarity or difference of the meanings I took from this work.

There was however resonance with theory and practice raised in the mess-finding stage of exploring the literature and contemplating methodology and method in related works. Participants echoed the emancipatory aims of Dewey (1939), Habermas (2002) and Freire (1970/2000), captured most in the *clarifying purpose* theme and interwoven throughout the meanings they shared. They spoke

to aspects of Habermas' notion of the public sphere and Freire's concept of conscientization as well, highlighting these in stories about *curriculum* and *teaching*. Bronfenbrenner's ecosystem of human development (1979) was evident in their stories too, with specific examples of the various systems appearing most clearly in the *locating self*, *institutional challenges*, *relationships with Indigenous Peoples* and *relationships with Indigenous Knowledges* themes. Descriptions of praxis (Freire, 1970/2000) interwoven through their stories shared many similarities with approaches to creating ethical spaces and ally work offered by Bishop (2015), DiAngelo (2011), Gehl (n.d), hooks (1990), Sennet (2012), Sensoy and DiAngelo (2017) Snowden and Boon (2007), Wheatley and Frieze (2011), and found most often in the *curriculum* and *teaching themes*, but also in the *relationship with Indigenous Peoples* and *what would help* themes. The *self-reflections* theme captured well-developed and emergent understandings of the themselves along the continuum of engagement that Child (2018) suggests and gave insight into the application of the Johari Window (Luft & Ingram, 1955). They made specific references to the difficult but necessary observations that hooks (1990), DiAngelo (2011) and others have surfaced about the influence of race and privilege, and the challenges that people of privilege have in recognizing and negotiating their way through that privilege when engaging in social transformation work. Participants described encountering these challenges in the *clarifying purpose* and *self-reflections themes*, describing in many cases aspects of the specific actions that Sensoy and DiAngelo (2017) and Gehl (n.d.) offer to guide this reflexivity.

The meanings I gleaned from the conversations were thus generally aligned with the theory and practices I had reviewed, and they provided rich details about the specific experience of the participants in context through these lenses. It is these details that can offer insights for other circles along the journey towards reconciliation as we walk in a new way as Indigenous Peoples, immigrant-descendants and immigrants together.

Offerings for Circles of the Future

The themes and key points that were raised in the conversations offer insights into what has worked for faculty and what remains challenging as they approach the necessary work of changing curricula and teaching students to honour the Calls to Action specifically, and to contribute to social transformation generally, as so many have been called to do. Each of the themes contained key points that might be considered and addressed in and of themselves. The large volume of observations and overt requests for action and change is testimony to how much needs to be done, and how many opportunities remain. There are many ways in which I can *incorporate into my lifestyle* the meanings of this research. I offer some possibilities for circles of action that I have already begun to join in my work life and some possibilities for future research for myself and for others to consider.

Possibilities for Action

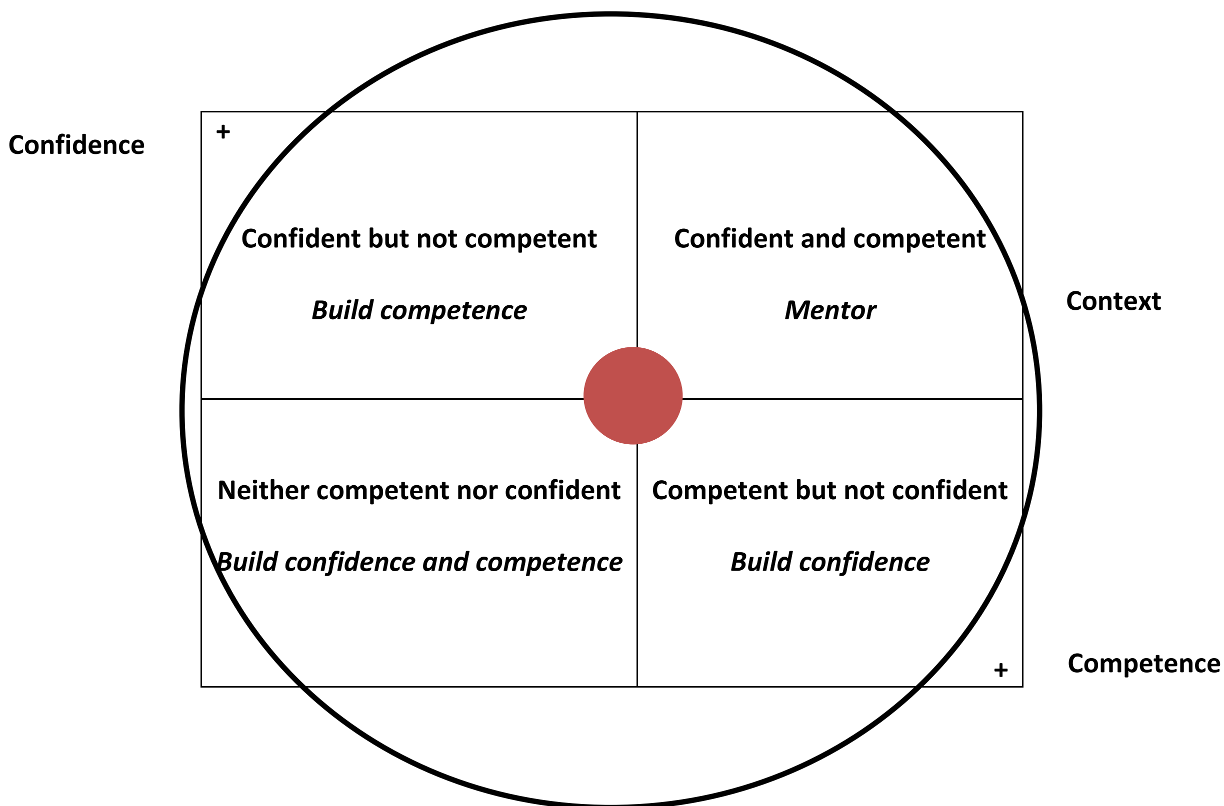
A framework based on the intersection of self-assessed competence and confidence in a given context was developed that might offer an empirical heuristic (St. Clair, 2005) to provide insight into the experience of faculty members at Royal Roads, faculty members at other institutions and perhaps for people approaching ally work in different contexts.

Recalling that the purpose of this research was to better understand the experiences of immigrant-descendant and immigrant faculty to inform how we can support them in reconciliation work, this framework suggests that a range of support is necessary to address the variability in faculty self-assessments of competence and confidence. Applying the framework to the practical application of supporting immigrant-descendant and immigrant faculty members, a suite of offerings that responds to the places that faculty might see themselves in the intersection of competence and confidence could be derived from considering specific fires around which they might gather. Taken together, common needs might emerge, and thus general and specific supports could be impactful. The simple descriptors of each

quadrant suggest actions that might follow to support faculty who might locate themselves there as indicated in Figure 7.

Figure 7

Building Competence and Confidence as a Framework for Action



For those who consider themselves neither confident nor competent, the challenge will be to build both competence and confidence. Continuing with the example of giving a land acknowledgement, this might entail providing information about names of the host Nations and their Chiefs, including pronunciation guides, and offering further education on the history of the lands on which the institution is located to develop deeper knowledge. This information and education could be complemented by creating opportunities for faculty to witness others performing land acknowledgements and to practice in safe settings where they are partnered with someone who can provide positive, constructive

feedback. For those who sees themselves as confident but not competent, the challenge is to build their sense of competence. This might be supported by building on previous experiences where they have felt competent, directly addressing what has challenged their sense of competence in the past or seems challenging in the current context, and continuing to provide positive, constructive feedback from a trusted source. Those who express competence, but lack confidence, may require encouragement and coaching to build confidence by fostering the belief that they can be competent in a particular context. Those who see themselves as confident and competent might be called upon to model land acknowledgements and provide the positive, constructive feedback referenced above in safe spaces.

This would be well informed by the work of Poitras Pratt & Danyluk (2019) who have proposed an Approaches to Reconciliation Model that offers three pathways to participating in reconciliation, "accessible to all Canadians if they are open to new perspectives, and if they are willing to listen and learn" (p.7). These pathways are described as "listening and learning from Indigenous peoples; walking with and learning from Indigenous peoples; and, working with and learning from Indigenous peoples" (Poitras Pratt & Danyluk, 2019, p. i). The framework proposed herein, founded on self-assessment of confidence and competence, is consistent with these scholars' contention that "a person's past experiences and current level of understanding will influence which of these approaches is most appealing" (p.7). The Approaches to Reconciliation Model takes the exercise of self-assessment to action by providing specific examples of individual private acts, public acts and complex relationship building that would be extremely beneficial to consider in developing a suite of options for faculty engagement based on the framework I have proposed.

Referring to this framework along with the key points raised in the themes might illuminate ways that we can create ethical spaces of engagement (Ermine, 2007) and prepare to enter them. Such supports might address variability in faculty self-assessments of competence and confidence by

emphasizing building competence, confidence or both conditions. The themes that emerged provide some insight into the types of challenges that faculty face, and thus might provide good places to start to consider what types of competencies can be supported and how confidence can be encouraged. Of all of the themes, *relationships with Indigenous Peoples* and *relationships with Indigenous Knowledges* recurred most at points in the conversations where participants expressed lower levels of competence and confidence, embedded in many key points raised in the *curriculum* and *teaching* themes as well. All of this could be informed by work of Indigenous and other scholars who have explored approaches to decolonizing curricula and bringing in Indigenous Knowledges in a good way (Adebisi, 2016; Cross, et al., 2019; Kinloch & Pedro, 2014; Lamaire, 2020; Le Grange, 2016; Letsoalo & Pero, 2020; Louie et.al., 2017; Poitras Pratt et. al., 2018b; Swidrovich, 2020). Faculty might also be encouraged to consider how they can integrate Poitras Pratt and Danyluk's (2019) Approaches to Reconciliation in their curricula and teaching. Research on each of these themes would provide further insight into the experience of immigrant-descendant and immigrant faculty members as they join the circle surrounding reconciliation and actions that might be taken to better prepare and support them.

Participants' suggestions offered in the *what might help* theme provide some concrete actions that might be included in a range of supports offered at Royal Roads and perhaps at other institutions. Picking up on the strong message from participants that it is critical for immigrant-descendants and immigrants feel safe and supported as they expose their vulnerabilities in this work, pursuing arts-informed inquiry might offer one approach to engage around these topics. The participatory theatre workshop that one participant referenced having been offered to positive review, the Witness Blanket exhibit (a multi-media art installation comprised of artifacts from Indian Residential Schools created by Carey Newman (Kwakwak'awakw/Coast Salish) that was previously hosted at Royal Roads University), and a button-blanket style wall hanging community project facilitated by Maxine Matilpi

(Kwakwak'awakw) convened in the Library provided pathways to engagement in reconciliation work through arts-informed inquiry in the past that could be expanded into a suite of ongoing offerings. Research undertaken through poetic inquiry to explore the experiences of immigrant-descendants and immigrants involved in ally work (Garbutt, 2019) might provide further insight into how arts-informed inquiry could be used the approaches to reconciliation that Poitras Pratt and Danyluk envision (2019). This could be part of a commitment to provide a range of actions that have learning outcomes related building competence and confidence, addressing each of the points along Child's (2018) continuum of awareness, knowledge, understanding and advocacy/action and incorporating key points raised by participants.

While many institutions have a growing number of Indigenous scholars, Royal Roads University had no Indigenous scholars as members of the core faculty complement at the time this research was conducted. Including Indigenous employees in all areas of an institution is necessary for myriad reasons, and recruiting and retaining Indigenous scholars, education advisors and instructional designers is the only way to systemically integrate Indigeneity in the academy in general and in the work of curriculum development and delivery that the Calls to Action require in particular. While Royal Roads has a strong track record of engaging Indigenous Peoples in its Board of Governors, the dearth of Indigenous employees makes it difficult to include Indigenous voices in the governance of the institution at other levels, such as the committee that approves new and updated curricula. Prioritizing hiring Indigenous scholars, education advisors and instructional designers as part of a larger human resources strategy to increase the representation of Indigenous Peoples across an institution would contribute to reparation and restitution of Indigenous Peoples by addressing legacies of colonialism that work to exclude them, while at the same time increasing opportunities for all university community members to build *relationships with Indigenous Peoples* and relationships with *Indigenous Knowledges.* To avoid the

tendency of turning to Indigenous Peoples to inform and educate immigrant-descendants and immigrants regardless of, and in addition to, the role they play within the institution, it would be advantageous to identify specific roles for Indigenous Peoples as scholars of Indigenous ontologies, epistemologies and methodologies, education advisors and instructional designers who are supported to work alongside immigrant-descendant and immigrant faculty members in curriculum development and delivery. While I contend that this is an obligation of the institution that would be emboldened by policy directives that make explicit the imperative of increasing the number of Indigenous faculty and staff in a wide range of roles, there is an opportunity to embrace this as a way of being to truly walk in a new way with Indigenous Peoples.

The concept of a Community of Practice for Indigenous, immigrant-descendant and immigrant faculty members, intended as an ethical space of engagement, a circle around the fire that represents the action of teaching merits exploration. It might be helpful to examine different approaches to establishing a Community of Practice or other venue that creates space for immigrant-descendants and immigrants to work through their self-professed ignorance and emotion without perpetuating trauma upon Indigenous Peoples. This would be the manifestation of the metaphor of talking amongst ourselves that I identified early in this work and there is a good deal that could be applied from the theory and practice reviewed in the mess-finding and *preparing the space* stages of this research and the meanings that resulted from the conversations.

The research identified two concrete actions that might be taken that might improve support immigrant-descendant and immigrant faculty at Royal Roads: creating a systemic approach to matching needs and wants determined by Indigenous Peoples and communities with the knowledge and skills that immigrant-descendant and immigrant faculty and their students and increasing support for building confidence and competence in making meaningful and authentic land acknowledgements. Though less

directly connected to the work required by the Calls to Action than other recommendations shared, these two actions would contribute to improving *relationships with Indigenous Peoples* and *relationships with Indigenous Knowledges* and reducing *institutional challenges*.

Possibilities for Further Research

There is tremendous opportunity to light other fires of action by undertaking research that goes well beyond the small fire of this study. There are several follow-up studies that would complement this research conducted at Royal Roads University. Perhaps most obvious is the opportunity for further research to explore the experiences of those who did not volunteer to participate in this research. There may have been many reasons why other faculty members did not choose to volunteer and it would be helpful to understand more about their motivations and experiences. Further, as only one of the 15 participants had an appointment in the Faculty of Management, it might be interesting to recruit participants from just this Faculty. Focusing on a group of participants defined by a narrower set of characteristics, such as only immigrants or only those who identify with a specific gender might provide deeper insight into the experiences of peers who share these characteristics.

It might also be interesting to conduct a similar study at other institutions. This research might yield different and enlightening results in a larger institution either across academic organizational units or within single areas. Focusing on departments were ontological stances have traditionally been more positivist such as mathematics and the pure and applied sciences might yield different insights. It would be enlightening to explore experiences of immigrant-descendant and immigrant faculty who have Indigenous faculty member peers. As this was not the case in the present study, interactions with Indigenous faculty in a scholarly community might result in different experiences and suggest different approaches that would be helpful as the presence of Indigenous scholars rightly increases in the academy.

In addition to exploring the experiences of different groups of participants or in different contexts, using different methodologies and methods might expand understanding of the experiences of immigrant-descendant and immigrant faculty as they approach reconciliation work. For example, a survey tool that provides a series of open-ended questions might result in stories that participants might be less likely to tell in conversation with another person, regardless of their relationship, might be used to invite faculty stories about their experiences and invite suggestions for action.

Every theme identified in this research could be explored further. Each on is a potential fire of action around which a circle might be convened, in the Royal Roads context and elsewhere. Myriad questions could be derived from the key points raised in all nine themes, but perhaps most pressing are those that explore interrelationships between *relationships with Indigenous Peoples*, *relationships with Indigenous Knowledges, curriculum*, *teaching*, and *institutional challenges*. Continuing work to understand immigrant-descendant and immigrant faculty members' experiences and respond to the needs they articulate and those that emerge from insight and reflection on their collective experiences will help to shine a light on where we can make the most difference as we strive to create ethical spaces for engagement that encircle the many actions that we must take together on this journey towards the top of the mountain that Justice Murray Sinclair (Macleans, 2015) envisioned.

Why me? What now?

Having stopped at this circle in my personal learning journey, as I prepare to move on, I reflect on why I was drawn to visit here and where I am heading next. One of the teachings that has been shared with me by Indigenous Knowledge Keepers is to let go of seeking a rational explanation for why I find myself somewhere and instead thinking about what my purpose might be intended to be in that place. I described the circumstances that brought me to this circle in the first chapter and the purpose I understood then, much of which focused on facilitating the learning of others to propel their

contributions to responding to the Calls to Action and reconciliation, emphasizing my pragmatic nature. Now as this work concludes, I can see that my presence here had purpose, but that it was perhaps as much, or more, about personal transformation as it was about social transformation. It is notable that that the things that seem to have most meaning for me relate more to who I am becoming and less about the applicability of the theories of scholars or practitioners in the dominant culture.

The practice of recording autoethnographic observations throughout the research made clear that I did not know myself as well as I thought I did. The humility that this engenders is welcome and I find an unfamiliar sense of comfort in not expecting to have the answers. I am reminded of the gifts that critical theory and feminist theory offer in encouraging insight through lenses of culture and power. The autoethnographic observations that had the most impact on me related to seeing the influence of the dominant culture in ways in which I experience linear progression of tasks driven by self-imposed schedules and the impact this can have on accountability to ideas as much as people. The experience of being in relationship with ideas was revealed to me in new ways and I find myself returning to this thinking in many areas of my life. The apparent difference between the way that metacognition, or thinking about the way we think, is approached in dominant and Indigenous cultures will be something I will continue to reflect upon, particularly as I continue to support Indigenous education in my formal role and as an instructor. I will continue to explore and work to respond to the limitations that dominant cultural structures for engagement place upon reflective discourse and achieving anything close to what Habermas imagined as the public sphere (Habermas, 1989) imagined or the ethical spaces that Ermine (2007) envisions. These observations showed me that Ermine (2007) was so very right when he observed that “What remains hidden and enfolded are the deeper level thoughts, interests and assumptions that will inevitably influence and animate the kind of relationship the two can have” (p. 195). I understand now that the “two” that Ermine references can be occur in the natural, cognitive or

spiritual worlds. I know now that I will continue to join spaces where I must bring exercise critical consciousness and humbly work to make them ethical and brave, whether in my personal or professional life, or as I continue to join circles of action in the journey towards reconciliation.

As I stated at the beginning of this chapter, this experience will forever glow within me and I trust that it will continue to spark awareness, knowledge, understanding and advocacy/action (Child, 2018) in the small part I can play in reconciliation work and in so many other aspects of my life. I*ncorporating into my lifestyle* what I have learned and continuing to strive to *live a congruent lifestyle*, I have begun to think of how the steps of research as ceremony that Wilson (S. Wilson, personal communication, February 2, 2020) provided that guided my approach to this research could be applied in circles of action: *live a congruent lifestyle*, *prepare the space*, *assemble, engage in ritual, incorporate into your lifestyle*. I see myself moving through the work of incorporating this research into my lifestyle and living a congruent lifestyle, not expecting any linear progression, but with openness and critical consciousness as I stop in brave spaces.

Conclusion

In his last recorded interview, Freire (2009) concluded, “My philosophical conviction is that we did not come to keep the world as it is. We came to the world in order to remake the world”. Reconciliation gives us an opportunity to remake our world. Change must come to our post-secondary institutions to bring Indigenous Peoples reparation and restitution first and foremost, and ultimately to serve us all in the freer, more humane world.

There is much more work to be done to take on the tasks of reconciliation, and much more work to be done to shape brave, ethical spaces of engagement where this can occur. It is my intention to carry the meanings that I gleaned from this research with me as I continue to wander the paths that lead

to the top of the mountain that Justice Murray Sinclair (Macleans, 2015) envisioned, stopping at fires along the way to join in circles around actions that together comprise the great circle that surrounds the challenge of reconciliation. There is one thing I do know for certain: I will never wear a ball cap with the word “Decolonized” embroidered on it.

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